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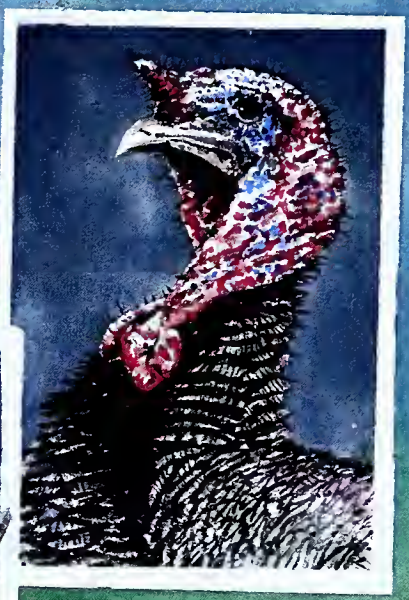
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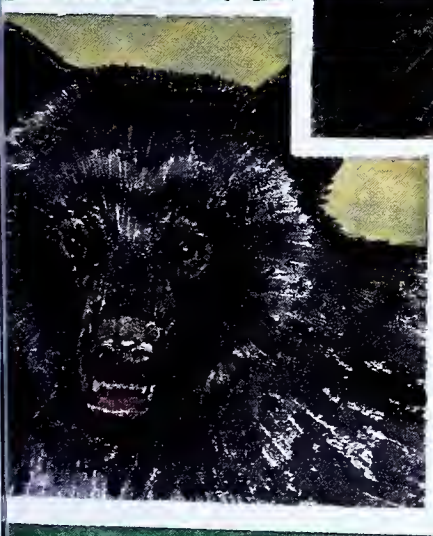
PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

JANUARY, 2000 $ 1.50









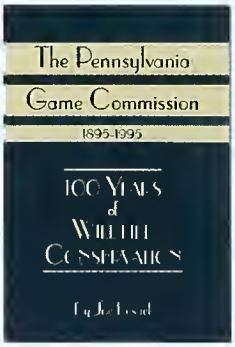


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Annual Report Issue

PGC Books



Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, *by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.*
Price: $12.26



Birds of Pennsylvania, *a 214-page hardcover by James and Lillian Wakeley, details birds most commonly found here, plus information on their biology and behavior.*
Price: $12.26



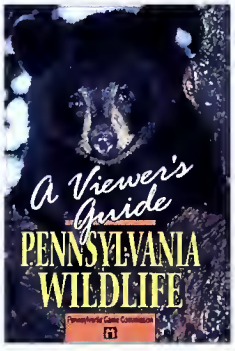
Pennsylvania Game Cookbook *is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.*
Price: $4.71

Gone for the Day *is a compilation of* Game News *columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.*
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Mammals of Pennsylvania, *by J. Kenneth Doutt et.al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.*
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Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, *by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.*
Price: $12.26



Pennsylvania Big Game Records, 1965-1986, *lists the state's official trophy deer and bear records, along with many stories of exciting hunts.*
Price: $9.43

Prices include handling and postage. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make check or money order (no cash, please) payable to Pennsylvania Game Commission and send to Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Items may now be ordered over the phone, Visa or MasterCard accepted, by calling 1-888-888-3459.

PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

Volume 71 ● No. 1
JANUARY 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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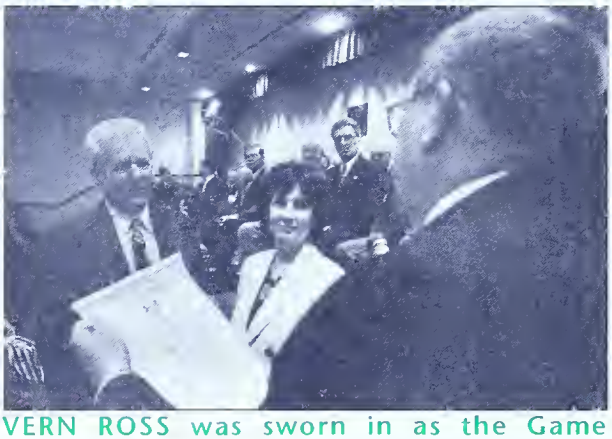
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Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report, 1998-99

1998-99

THE GAME COMMISSION has accomplished much in recent months. There has been a concerted agency-wide effort to improve the commission's reputation with the public, including hunters, farmers and other landowners, the General Assembly, the Governor's Office and local governments.

One of the Game Commission's greatest assets is its employees – full-time, part-time and volunteers. With their continued support and dedication, the agency will continue to improve. Using the Management Assistance Team report as a guide, the commission will continue to implement changes designed to improve its internal and external communications and to further fulfill its mission as the state agency entrusted with the management of Pennsylvania's wildlife.



VERN ROSS was sworn in as the Game Commission's new executive director in May 1999. He is the 16th person to head the agency since it was formed in 1895.

We have greatly enhanced communications within the Game Commission and between the six regional offices, the Harrisburg office and the field, through new technologies such as e-mail and voice mail.

In the area of deer management, we've renewed our focus on this vitally important species, by creating a deer management section and appointing world renowned wildlife biologist Dr. Gary Alt to take charge of it.

We have: implemented the internal affairs and complaint-tracking systems; re-emphasized our poacher hotline; held news conferences to discuss issues of public concern; opened the Harrisburg office to public tours; developed a landowner database to connect hunters with property owners seeking assistance controlling wildlife; and created a grant program to involve hunting and outdoors organizations, youth groups, civic groups and others interested in wildlife in our habitat improvement projects.

In keeping an eye on how we spend the hunter dollars we are entrusted with, we have taken a hard look at the budget. We will begin selling ads in the Hunting Digest to offset costs of printing. We are seeking legislative approval to take advantage of e-commerce to sell hunting licenses and other Game Commission items through our website. The new positions we created to better manage our public relations – such as the hiring of a policy director, press secretary and webmaster – were formed from the existing complement. Finally, we are seeking alternative sources for funding to accomplish our goals.

These are just a few of the many positive changes at the Game Commission. We will continue to move this agency forward as we begin another century of hunting in Penn's Woods. The following annual report highlights even more of the Game Commission's accomplishments. This year's report is arranged to correspond to the agency's strategic plan, not our administrative structure as in past years. We hope this will give readers an even better understanding of what the Pennsylvania Game Commission does for wildlife, and the people who enjoy and appreciate this outstanding natural resource.

Wildlife Management

The basic goal of our wildlife management program is to manage for healthy wildlife populations that are acceptable to Pennsylvanians and their communities. We survey and monitor wildlife populations, study the relationships between wildlife, habitat and humans and their communities, develop management plans, and apply the management tools of hunting, trapping, habitat management, enforcement, communications and education to achieve the balance between biological and social acceptability.

Goal: Manage wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels.



DREW SLOCUM, Osceola, dropped this Tioga County 8-point using the same .243 Remington his father used 25 years ago to take his first buck.

Deer management continues to be the agency's most important and controversial issue. To share information about our deer management program and to encourage public input, eight open houses were held. Nearly 2,000 people attended. A compilation of comments is available upon request.

A Deer Management Working Group, chaired by Wildlife Management Institute Northeast Regional Representative Scot Williamson and composed of nearly 40 stakeholder representatives, was organized in July 1998 to bring all groups to a common table to achieve informed consent on deer population goals and acceptable management strategies. The working group reached consensus on five major issues, initiated a review of our deer management model, and proposed a harvest management program that provides for alternative strategies for local areas and private vs. public lands.

The 1998-99 season was the fourth year of collecting data on our habitat-based deer management units. At least one more year of data is needed to evaluate this system.

In 1998, hunters harvested 377,489 deer, including more than 11,300 antlerless deer by junior hunters on the two Saturdays of buck season. The buck harvest (181,449) was the second highest recorded and the antlerless harvest (196,040) was the lowest since 1987. Archers harvested 59,715 deer, or 16 percent of the total harvest. Rifle hunters took 308,530 deer, 82 percent; and muzzleloaders harvested 9,244 deer, 2 percent. Hunter reporting rates in 1998 declined to 46 percent, for both antlered and antlerless deer.

IN 1998, 30 teams of PGC specialists visited more than 425 deer processors and examined more than 46,000 deer.



Following the 1998-99 hunting season, about 910,000 deer remained (35 deer/mi^2 forest), or 15 percent more than the winter before. Only seven counties are within 20 percent of established population goals, down from 14 the year before. Spring mortality surveys by WCOs averaged only 0.15 dead deer per mile of stream bottom. After accounting for normal, between season losses and reproduction, the 1999 fall population exceeded 1.4 million deer, including 1.15 million antlerless deer.

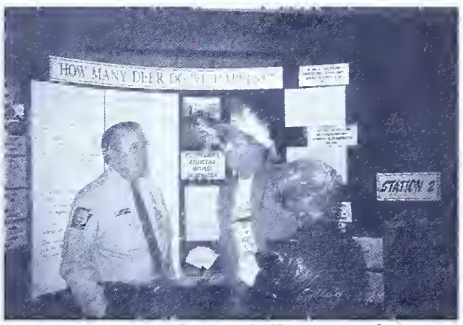
The 1998 preseason black bear population was estimated

1998-99

at slightly more than 9,900. From that, hunters harvested a record 2,598, surpassing the previous record of 2,220 set in 1989. The 1998 harvest rate was 26.1 percent, the second highest on record and significantly above the 1980-97 average of 19.9 percent.

In March 1998, 33 elk were released in the Sproul State Forest in Clinton County, completing the first of three planned annual relocations designed to accelerate and direct ongoing natural range expansion and to reduce elk conflicts. Of the 10 adult cows released, 9 produced calves in the summer of 1998. The January 1999 elk survey indicated the population to be 480, comprised of 255 adult cows, 92 calves, 71 adult bulls, 33 spike bulls and 29 elk of unknown sex and age.

As the 1998-99 year drew to a close, plans were being made to form an elk hunting implementation committee, which would be charged with developing by March 2000 an elk hunt proposal.



DEER MANAGEMENT open houses were held in each region during the winter of 1998-99, to give people an opportunity to provide input and talk with PGC personnel about deer management.

In 1998, WCOs saw 13 percent more turkeys than in 1997. The '98 spring harvest (32,661) was the third highest on record, and the fall harvest (33,628) ranks fifth, and the total harvest marks the fourth consecutive year harvests have exceeded 60,000.

A wild turkey management plan was prepared and will be used to guide population, habitat and harvest management actions in the future. Prepared by wildlife biologist Bill Drake, the report reviewed the history of our turkey management efforts and outlined goals, objectives and strategies for turkey management for the next decade. In 1999 a 2-year study was launched to determine survival rates and cause-specific mortality for hens on Turkey Management Area 7B. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF is contributing more than $25,000 to this project.

Harvest estimates for the 1998-99 grouse season indicate that 183,511 hunters took 183,468 birds. Grouse hunting days declined by 3 percent from 1997-98; however, harvest per hunter day remained stable. Grouse hunter cooperators flushed an average of 1.27 birds per hour in 1998-99, a decrease of 9 percent from 1997-98 and the lowest rate since 1984-85.



FOR TWO YEARS elk have been captured in a corral trap, above, and then moved to the Sproul State Forest in Clinton County, to expand the elk range in the state.

Grouse populations on the Scotia habitat management area on SGL 176 in Centre County have been monitored since 1976, to measure population responses to a 2.5-acre patch cutting program set up on a 40-year rotation. Recent results show that the managed area continues to carry more grouse than the unmanaged area. What we do not yet know is how long the effect of the cuttings will last.

Our 1999 waterfowl surveys indicated the statewide breeding wood duck population was 59,000 pairs, the highest since annual surveys began in 1989. Breeding

mallard pairs, at 121,500, were 24 percent above the 10-year average. Canada geese totaled 104,343 pairs, 82 percent higher than the most recent 10-year average. The total Canada goose population estimate of 262,000 is the highest since the survey began and reflects our expanding resident goose population.

During the 1999 preseason banding period, 4,679 ducks were banded, including 3,221 mallards, 57 black ducks, and 1,377 wood ducks. The drought reduced the quantity and quality of brood-rearing habitats and negatively affected banding success; however, wood duck production appeared good, while mallard and black duck production appeared to be down slightly.

During June 1999, 2,270 Canada geese were banded in the state. The subsequent recoveries of these banded geese by hunters will allow us to evaluate and refine resident goose seasons.



MORE THAN 4,000 ducks are banded in Pennsylvania every year. Band recovery data is used to monitor harvest rates and other factors needed to manage waterfowl populations.

Traditional fall hunting seasons, closed from 1995-98, on Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese were restored throughout the Atlantic Flyway in 1999. The commission, the Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust and the Lehigh Valley Chapter of Safari Club International have supported work on AP geese on the northern Quebec breeding grounds, by providing personnel and funds to conduct surveys, reproductive studies and banding to determine factors limiting this population of geese, once the largest in the AF.

Wintering tundra swans in the AF are being studied in several states. In 1999, 71 were banded in Lancaster County, to learn more about the migration routes, breeding areas and survival rates of swans that winter in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Research continued on the effects of hunting on local woodcock populations in northwestern Pennsylvania. On several study areas in Crawford and Erie counties, woodcock were captured, fitted with radio transmitters and monitored through the fall, to estimate survival between hunted and non-hunted areas. More than 100 woodcock were fitted with radios in 1998. This study will conclude following the 1999 season, and is part of a cooperative effort with the USFWS, the Biological Research Division of the USGS, and Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. To fund this study, the USFWS provided the agency more than $43,500, and $3,750 was provided by the Ruffed Grouse Society and $1,000 by the Lehigh Valley Chapter of Safari Club International.



A CANADA GOOSE is banded along Hudson Bay near Povungnituk, Quebec. More than 75,000 were captured and banded last summer. The information obtained ultimately resulted in the reopening of the fall goose season in Pennsylvania and other AF states.

Fishers, formerly an extirpated species, appear to be well established in northern Pennsylvania, thanks to the reintroduction program and, in southwestern Pennsylvania, due to range expansion of fishers from West Virginia. With monitoring efforts in 1998-99 hampered by a lack of snow, we resorted to fisher visitation at bait stations.

1998-99

During 1998-99, trappers harvested 8,727 beavers. Pelt prices also decreased, averaging $15.29. The calculated statewide beaver population was 28,573. Following five years of increase, beaver numbers decreased 6 percent during the past two years.

Pennsylvania was among four Northeastern states that participated in the nationwide Best Management Practices for Trapping Program in the fall of 1998. We tested three trap types — the 1.75 Victor regular jaw coilspring, 1.75 Victor laminated offset jaw coilspring, and 1¾ Sleepy Creek wide offset jaw coilspring — for eastern coyotes and secondary target species. Four trappers participated for 14 to 30 days during mid-October and early November. They caught 53 coyotes, 34 gray foxes, 22 red foxes, 33 raccoons, 36 opossums and 5 skunks. One trapper also captured and released 1 fisher and 3 bobcats.



TUNDRA SWANS in Lancaster County are captured with the use of rocket nets and leg-banded. Recaptures of banded swans will be used to identify migration routes, breeding areas and determine survival rates.

Captures for all four participating northeastern states totaled 144 coyotes, 162 fox, 80 raccoon, 43 opossum, 22 skunks and 2 fishers. National project coordinators will evaluate trap efficiency, selectivity, practicality and human safety. Pathologists in Wyoming and Georgia are assessing injuries to captured animals.

Pennsylvania's endangered and threatened birds of prey have experienced record nesting success. Bald eagles have been expanding here since the 1980s, when 88 young were raised and released at two hack sites. In 1999, 11 new eagle nests were discovered, bringing the state's total to 41. New eagle nests were found in Chester, Crawford, Forest, Huntingdon, Mercer, Pike and York counties. In all, 42 young eagles were produced.

At least eight pairs of peregrine falcons nested here in 1998; four were successful, producing 12 young. In 1999, 14 young peregrines, a new record, were banded at five sites. Peregrines are now nesting in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Wilkes-Barre. A new pair in Harrisburg raises hope for a successful nest in our state capital next year.



WOODCOCK outfitted with tiny radio transmitters are being used to determine survival rates on hunted and non-hunted areas in Crawford and Erie counties. Results from this study will aid in determining what effects hunting has upon local woodcock populations.

In 1998, osprey nesting reports came from almost every region of the state. Once extirpated here, ospreys have been increasing since the 1980s, when 110 young were released here. The breeding population grew from a single nest in 1986, in the Poconos, to around 40 in 1998. WCOs reported many new sites, including nests in Beaver, Crawford, Mercer and Pike counties. Releases at Moraine State Park have fueled an expansion into the northwest in recent years.

In June 1999 more than 200 biologists, naturalists, birders and other specialists combed 10 square miles of SGL 211 in Lebanon County as part of a 24-hour forest bioblitz. Their goal was to find and identify as many animals and plants as possible. In the 24-hour timeframe more than 1,250 species were catalogued; many were

the first species occurrences recorded for the game lands and the county.

In January 1999 the commission changed the status of several species of birds. Ospreys were upgraded from endangered to threatened, due to increased nesting activity across the state. The American bittern was downgraded from threatened to endangered, due to its very restricted range and limited nesting (less than 10 pairs). Least bitterns have been declining at five regularly occupied locations in recent years, prompting its reclassification to endangered status. In Pennsylvania, great egrets nest in only one island colony, and continued threats to this site was the reason for upgrading this species to endangered. A small number of active nests (8 to 12) with poor productivity, restricted to the lower Susquehanna, was the reason for listing yellow-crowned night-herons as endangered. The common tern, a formerly extirpated species, was added to the endangered list because of recent breeding attempts at Presque Isle State Park. Finally, the dickcissel, a small grassland bird that nests in just a few locations in Franklin, Cumberland and Adams counties, was listed as threatened.



THIS FISHER was caught by a remote camera as it visited a bait station. Fishers seem to have become established here.

Colonial nesting bird surveys in 1998 revealed that the black-crowned night-heron population, less than 400 nesting pairs, remains precarious here. Egret numbers held steady at 144 active nests in one location. Great blue heron colonies are widely distributed across the state and numbers are increasing. The largest colony ever recorded in Pennsylvania is in Mercer County.

In recent decades, meadowlarks, vesper sparrows and other birds associated with meadows, hayfields and pastures have experienced larger declines than any other group of birds. To better identify and track these changes, the Grassland Breeding Bird Survey (GBBS) was initiated in 1989, in cooperation with the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. Volunteers have now conducted this survey for more than 10 years. A substantial database (about 15,000 bird observations and 28,000 habitat entries) has been generated on more than 50 routes.



Peter B. Kaplan

PGC BIOLOGIST Dan Brauning checks a peregrine falcon nest on a bridge in Philadelphia. Peregrines seem to be adapting well to inner city environments.

A milestone was reached this year, with the signing of the first Important Bird Area (IBA) landowner cooperative agreement. This non-binding agreement provides additional protection for a night-heron colony in Lancaster County. The IBA program is a cooperative venture of

1998-99 Pheasant Releases

	Hens	Cocks
September releases	35,324	0
Fall hunting season releases	43,498	115,470
Late season releases	3,991	1,330
Spring breeders	17,429	1,359

1998-99

the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey and the Game Commission.

Several bat species remain at risk here. Hibernating bats are particularly vulnerable, because of repeated disturbance to the caves and mines used as hibernacula. In 1999, 29 caves, mines and tunnels in 15 counties were surveyed, and 40,864 bats were counted, including 396 federally endangered Indiana bats and 27 threatened eastern small-footed myotis. Over 37,000 little brown bats were tallied. Two new sites containing Indiana bats were found, both in Somerset County.



GREG FORCEY completes a grassland bird survey. Grassland birds have been experiencing widespread, dramatic declines for decades.

Numerous islands and corridors of rock in eastern, central and northwestern Pennsylvania that had supported woodrats no longer do so. In 1998-99, 62 potential sites were surveyed, but only 13 showed evidence of use by woodrats. Based on those results and past surveys, 21 different woodrat population areas have been identified. Five no longer support woodrats and seven contain populations that are in danger of disappearing.

Neither Sichuan nor ring-necked pheasants released in the six pheasant restoration project release areas became established. The experiment that began in 1993, therefore, was terminated and the areas reopened to pheasant stocking and hunting in 1998.

In February 1999 Dr. Terry Riley, a field representative with the Wildlife Management Institute and former pheasant biologist with the Iowa DNR, reviewed our pheasant habitat conditions and management efforts. He concluded that large-scale landscape changes and a complex array of predators were the major reasons for the current status of pheasants here. In particular, he noted the increased conversion of agricultural land to forest over the past 40 years, a shift in agriculture production from small grains and pastures to row crops and hay production, increased human development in what had been the best pheasant range, and increases in avian predator populations. Dr. Riley concluded that our current small scale farmland habitat recovery efforts would not restore wild pheasant populations. Restoring a viable wild pheasant population would require converting many acres of cropland to idle grassland for pheasant nesting, brood rearing and winter cover. The effort should be concentrated in historically primary pheasant range, on areas of at least 25,000 acres, and that at least 10 areas would be needed. Once habitat targets have been achieved, trap and transfer of wild pheasants may be necessary.



MORE THAN 800 people took advantage of game farm tours. One thing that seemed to intrigue many was how much work is involved in raising pheasants.

For the first time, as a result of a reward-band study conducted in 1998-99 season, we have statewide harvest rates. Overall, 51 percent of pheasants stocked for the regular and late seasons were harvested. The average cost to put a

pheasant in the hunter's bag was $28.31, but ranged from $21.74 to $92.11, depending on the time and location of where birds were released. Using all birds released to calculate costs (including September releases of hens for dog training in the South Zone, where they cannot be harvested), the average cost per pheasant in the hunter's bag was $32.90. A copy of the final harvest rate report is available upon request.

For many years wildlife administrators in the Northeast have been increasingly concerned about escalating wildlife damage problems and the resulting public devaluation of wildlife, a lack of standard methods for dealing with nuisance wildlife, and the expense of wildlife damage research. In 1997 an ad hoc committee was formed to evaluate the situation and suggest ways to promote a coordinated and cost-effective regional management and research approach. In April 1999, the Northeast Directors approved the cooperative and funding strategy, and the Game Commission signed on as a cooperating member that summer.



COCKS RELEASED on public lands had harvest rates of 65 percent, on private land, 48 percent. For hens, 52 percent released on public land were harvested versus 31 percent on private land. Few stocked pheasants survived more than 30 days and birds stocked on public land had lower survival rates. Generally, harvest rates increased as the week progressed toward Saturday.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Human activities and natural processes have altered habitat quality in many areas, to the detriment of many publicly preferred wildlife species. The protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats work to ensure viable populations of all wildlife. We need to develop and implement habitat programs and projects that recognize the life requirements of desirable species on a landscape scale, regardless of land ownership, to improve conditions for wildlife and ensure their long-term health.

Goal: Manage and improve wildlife habitats on public and private lands to sustain viable wildlife populations.

This fiscal year the commission acquired 5,889 acres, bringing the agency's total state game land acreage to 1,392,311, consisting of 293 separate tracts in 65 counties. In lieu of taxes on these properties, local government bodies received $1.20 per acre. This totaled $1,672,154.91 and was divided into three equal payments to the county, school district and township where each game lands is located. In managing game lands, the Food and Cover Corps and land managers planted 3,521 acres of grain and 2,312 acres of grasses and legumes; approximately 7,410 acres of wildlife food plots were limed and fertilized to improve wildlife food production; 14,762 acres were mowed to maintain high



STATE GAME LANDS are managed to provide a wide variety of habitats to, in turn, provide the needs for a wide variety of wildlife.

1998-99

quality grasses; 1,057 acres of field borders were cut to provide nesting and escape cover; and 22,486 trees were pruned to improve fruit and seed production; and, finally, 1,107 nest boxes and 722 waterfowl nest structures were erected.

Assisting with our habitat management efforts were eight work crews employed through the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC). These workers helped with planting seedlings and warm season grasses, erecting streambank fencing, and other habitat projects. Crews also constructed storage buildings, painted and made repairs to Food & Cover Corps headquarters, installed gates, and painted and maintained game lands boundary lines.



JAIRUS SHEFFIELD and LUIS MOORE show off just a sampling of the nest boxes the Game Commission makes and distributes to cooperators in our public access programs.

This year, 3.5 million evergreen and deciduous seedlings were grown and distributed for planting on game lands and public access lands. The wood shop produced 4,124 bluebird boxes, 10,649 bluebird box kits, 713 wood duck boxes and several hundred squirrel, kestrel, barn owl and bat boxes for placement on game lands.

To maintain optimum habitat diversity on our forested game lands, 6,023 acres were scheduled for commercial timber cutting operations. Another 868 acres were treated with herbicide to remove ferns, striped maple, spicebush and low quality beech brush hampering the establishment of more beneficial species. Our two Upland Vegetation Management machines were used to treat 973 acres by cutting and shearing advanced growth of woody vegetation, so it could remain in an early successional, low ground cover stage.

Commercial timber sales on 8,942 acres produced revenues of $14,288,928, an increase of $2,989,287 from the year before. These activities yielded more than 25.4 million board feet of logs and 155,800 tons of pulpwood.

Logging contractors completed 69 timber sale contracts during the year, improved 105.2 miles of haul roads, constructed 17.3 miles of new roads (which become wildlife food strips after seedling) and placed 353 culverts.



HIKING, photography and many other outdoor recreation activities are encouraged on game lands, providing they don't detract from or inhibit the wildlife management practices being conducted.

As this fiscal year ended, final review of Pennsylvania's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was underway. This important program will help restore farmland wildlife habitats, reduce soil erosion, and improve water quality in the Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds by idling 100,000 acres of farmland.

During the year we completed a plan for CREP implementation. Nine wildlife habitat specialists will be hired through an agreement with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service to enhance CREP here. The program cost will be about $220 million over the next 15 years. Approximately $150 million will be new federal funds for Pennsylvania.

Wildlife Habitat Protection

A comprehenisve habitat management program also provides environmental protection and monitoring to assure that habitat degredation is alleviated, reduced and mitigated. Traditionally, environmental protection has focused on air, water, and soil quality. Although these concerns are essential, wildlife and habitat values should be incorporated in environmental protection. The commission strives for recognition of wildlife and its habitat as a valuable natural resource, just like air, water and soil.



THE GAME COMMISSION works with other government agencies in many ways to minimize the loss of wildlife habitat during highway construction and other major projects.

Goal: Ensure wildlife habitat values are considered in the decision making procedures involving alterations to the environment.

A new initiative called Roadside Maintenance for Wildlife has been developed to improve roadsides for wildlife. Partnering with the Game Commission is the PA Department of Transportation, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, and the Penn State Agricultural Extension Unit. By limiting mowing frequency, mowing during certain dates, reducing vegetation to a minimum height of 10 to 12 inches, and establishing warm season grasses, money will be saved on fuel, labor and equipment. These measures will provide food and cover and nesting areas for insects, birds and small mammals within the thousands of acres along Pennsylvania's highways.

Land Access

Cooperative agreements with public and private landowners permit the commission to secure land for recreation and develop a network of conservation oriented individuals who participate in other habitat management projects. We intend to continue diligent efforts to encourage public and private interests to incorporate public hunting and conservation projects in their land use plans.

Goal: Provide access to public and private lands for public hunting, trapping and other wildlife related recreational activities.

The Game Commission's public access programs continue to provide public hunting opportunities on private lands. The Cooperative Farm-Game Program, which began in 1936, today consists of 186 Farm-Game projects located in 59 counties, consisting of



MIKE SCHMIT, right, deputy executive director, examines deer damage to an alfalfa field. The Game Commission has a long history of working with landowners to enhance wildlife habitat and provide public hunting opportunities.



1998-99

more than 21,500 landowners keeping over 2.4 million acres open to hunting. The Safety Zone Program, adopted in 1958, has 1.4 million acres of land enrolled, thanks to 8,788 cooperating landowners. The Forest Game Program has 66 landowners allowing public hunting on 591,827 acres. In all, 30,411 landowners are keeping 4,472,644 acres open to hunting.

Hunters and trappers have a vital role in these public access programs, by being honest, ethical and respectful when on these private lands. Every hunter and trapper should ask permission and respect landowners and the lands upon which they hunt.

Communications and Education

The effective communication of knowledge and information is essential for a public conservation agency. Over the years, the commission has developed many programs to inform people about the value of wildlife and commission activities. Increasing this knowledge and appreciation for wildlife can be accomplished only through an effective education and communications effort.

Goal: Create and enhance public awareness, understanding and appreciation for the commonwealth's wildlife resources, their management, related recreational opportunities, and for the commission's programs and related services.

A highlight of 1998-99 was the 1998 Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage, held at Hershey. Hosted by Governor Ridge and more than 60 supporting governmental, conservation and private enterprise interests, the event drew more than 700 people from throughout the United States. In addition to the tremendous array of presentations and activities, the symposium also served to forge partnerships within the hunting, conservation and outdoor industry community.



ED TEMPLE, biologist for Ducks Unlimited's Chesapeake Bay Project, describes the benefits of streambank fencing to a group of Lancaster County landowners involved in the Pequea-Mill Creek project.

A Snow Goose Workshop presented at Middle Creek last January (see April '99 *Game News*), and a series of technical seminars held at Penn State covering warm-season grasses and water level management on impoundments to benefit wildlife are but two offshoots from the symposium.

To correct a backlog for acknowledging unique partnerships that led to exceptional habitat improvement projects being completed on six state game lands, a series of recognition events involving Ducks Unlimited, NRCS, Northwest PA Duck Hunters Assn., Waterfowl USA and other organizations teamed up with the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners For Wildlife Program was started during 1999. Plans are also in the works to commemorate the Western PA Conservancy and the PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, for their help in acquiring the 50-acre Daugherty tract in Mercer County as an addition to SGL 130.

Closer to Harrisburg, a similar recognition effort is underway to generate public interest to support a capital fund-raising campaign to reimburse the Central PA Conservancy. This courageous organization successfully outbid commercial interests at auction on behalf of hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts to rescue an 80-acre tract from further development next to SGL 170 on Blue Mountain overlooking the Cumberland Valley and metropolitan Harrisburg. With the commission's share limited to the $400 per acre cap, the conservancy needs to raise $143,900 from outside sources within a 2-year span.



"TR" as portrayed by Keith McGough at the Governor's Symposium, receives some expert crossbow instruction from American Crossbow Federation's Ottie Snyder at the symposium breakout session at the Palmyra Sportsmen's Club.

While the Game Commission pioneered the way with streambank fencing to create wildlife habitat and improve water quality, its success over the past decade has attracted an impressive list of national, state and local partner/sponsors. One example is Lancaster County's Pequea-Mill Creek Project, making up 22 percent of the county's land base but home to more than 50 percent of the county's dairy herd. Since 1989, more than 100 farms with tributary streams affecting the Chesapeake Bay recovery initiative have been enrolled, resulting in over 60 miles of fencing in place and more than 100 concrete cattle crossings installed. Within the past two years, as a result of expanded public awareness, more than 25 partner organizations are now working on this project. Volunteers have planted trees and shrubs, erected nesting boxes and engineered trout habitat in the new stream corridors. Other partners contribute in-kind support or services. Hatfield Quality Meats and Landis Block & Concrete from Montgomery County, for example, teamed up to donate, transport and deliver more than 500 concrete flooring slats to be recycled as permanent cattle crossings.

In another example of partnerships, the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers, Waterfowl USA, Safari Club International's Blue Mt. and Lehigh Valley chapters and others helped underwrite the costs of the 4-year Atlantic Population Canada goose study. These groups invested some $14,000 in the commission's Migratory Game Bird Section projects, resulting in the development of a convincing database that's led to the restoration of expanded goose hunting opportunities here. Many of these same partners have expressed interest in helping us fund new research using radio telemetry to develop management strategies for tundra swans.



HUNTER ED, which, nationally, celebrated a 50th anniversary in 1999, is continually including more hands-on field activities to better prepare students for situations they'll encounter when afield.

The thirst for knowledge about Pennsylvania's wild places and wild things grows daily. Visits to the agency's Internet

1998-99

web site increased dramatically, with the news release section attracting the most attention.

News releases and general information are regularly provided to more than 500 newspapers, columnists and radio and television stations. This partnership with the media keeps Pennsylvania's 12 million citizens, particularly our more than a million hunters and trappers, abreast of the agency's management of the commonwealth's wildlife resources.

In 1998-99, 853 Hunter-Trapper Education courses were held, with 36,219 students being taught. Although the number of students is the lowest since 1969, Pennsylvania continues to train more students in basic hunter education than any other state.

With 63 new instructors trained and certified, the ranks of HTE instructors grew to 2,998. Additionally, 53 in-service seminars were held to keep veteran instructors abreast of new teaching methods and materials.

For the 15th consecutive year, Pennsylvania conducted a Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC). A near record 116 youngsters competed in sporting clays, smallbore rifle, muzzleloader, 3-D archery and hunter responsibility-wildlife identification events. The top 10 winners in both the junior and senior divisions went on to represent Pennsylvania at the International YHEC competition conducted by the NRA near Mansfield. At that event, the Keystone State garnered both the Junior and Senior Division team titles, plus the top senior individual award.

During the year a new student manual was produced, and it contains information included in the new national standards for hunter education as endorsed by the International Hunter Education Association. Also, as part of the development of a remedial hunter education course, the commission has forwarded to the legislature, proposed amendments to the Game and Wildlife Code that if enacted will require certain convicted game law violators to attend a specific remedial course prior to having their hunting privileges restored.

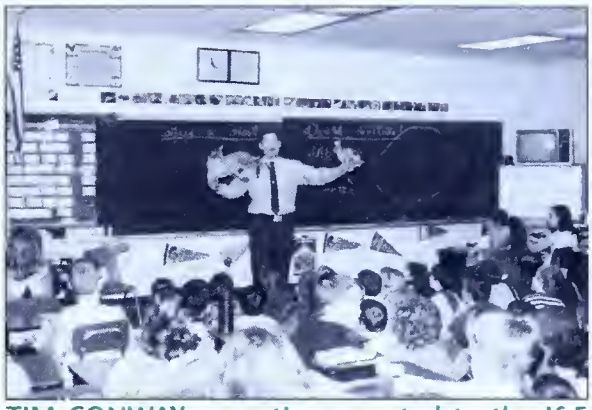
Our methods for obtaining and recording HTE records have been improved. Once

STUDENTS at the St. Cyril School in Pittsburgh show off one of the wildlife habitat management projects they conducted through a Project WILD ACTION grant. Developing programs to get youngsters involved in wildlife conservation is vital to fostering an appreciation in wildlife and our natural resources in this and future generations.



the more than 500,000 records back through 1987 have been entered into the computer based system, we'll be able to easily tell who has taken a course and when.

During the year a bowhunter education program was developed. Seven co-sponsors pledged and donated $50,000 to this effort. From this partnership effort, the agency's first advanced hunter education program will be launched early in the year 2000.



TIM CONWAY, recently promoted to the I&E supervisor position for the Northeast Region, presents a program on predator/prey relationships to a class of 2nd graders.

This year 61 Project WILD workshops took place, reaching more than 1,100 educators. These workshops were conducted by commission personnel and volunteer facilitators.

Continuing to expand conservation education efforts to new audiences, the commission received a grant from Project WILD National to develop a guide entitled "Project WILD — Pennsylvania Style." This supplement will contain activity adaptations, natural history and background information that will focus on Pennsylvania wildlife and wildlife conservation issues. The commission has also been working with Project WILD National on a supplement for secondary students that will address habitat exploration and improvement projects and environmental laws.

"Pennsylvania Songbirds," a joint publication of the Game Commission, DCNR Bureau of State Parks and Pennsylvania Audubon Society, became available to educators this year. Over 150 facilitators were trained and are now offering workshops throughout the state.

Eighteen schools and community youth groups were awarded WILD ACTION grants to improve habitat for wildlife on school and community grounds. Projects ranged from developing a bird and butterfly garden in Philadelphia to enhancing a lakeside area for wildlife education in the northwestern part of the state. The 1998-99 grant program was possible due to the generosity of the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association, Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Scott Eckert Conservation Scholarship Memorial Fund, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

Game News continues to be the primary voice of the Game Commission. The hunting stories, natural history accounts and, of course, Field Notes, remain popular with many outdoor enthusiasts, not just in Pennsylvania, but throughout the country. *Game News* also features articles about Game Commission research and management projects, and law enforcement accounts by our WCOs.

Game News contributors captured several noteworthy awards over the past year. Linda Steiner won 3rd place in the Outdoor Writers Association of America's Outdoor Ethics category for "What's in a Picture," from the April '98 issue. In the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Bob Sopchick captured Best Magazine Column Award for "Mountain Time," which appeared in the September '98 issue. Gerry Putt won the Best Wildlife Art Award, for the painting of a pair of pheasants he did for the October '97 cover, and Best Published Black and White Art Award for an illustration he did for the April '98 "Naturalist's Eye" column. Ken Hunter won the Best Published Color Art Award for the painting of a pair of bluebirds he did for the July '97 *Game News*.

Law Enforcement

A wildlife conservation agency establishes rules to conserve and protect wildlife, habitat and the public's use of these resources. An effective law enforcement program is an essential component of wildlife conservation. The commission intends to fulfill its legislative mandate and commitment to the public and the wildlife resources through an effective law enforcement program.

Goal: Protect the wildlife resources of the commonwealth, and ensure the safe and responsible use of these resources through the fair and equitable enforcement of wildlife laws.

Wildlife conservation officers and their deputies continued to devote untold hours investigating cases and prosecuting violators of the Game and Wildlife Code. Despite many vacancies among the ranks of our WCOs and a continuing decline in the number of deputies, the field force successfully prosecuted 6,492 cases during 1998-99. Penalties assessed for these infractions totaled $1,166,300. Of those cases pursued through the judicial system, 91 percent of the offenders were found guilty or pled guilty, which is reflective of our officers' skill, dedication and training. Also, during this year, 6,352 written warnings were issued for less serious violations.

A toll-free "TIP" hotline for people to use to report wildlife poaching incidents was established, and 53 calls relating to wildlife crimes were received on it. Several major prosecutions resulted from these calls, one of which concerned the killing of a bear in closed season.



WCOs and deputies prosecuted 6,492 cases during 1998-99, down 3,097 cases from the year before, and issued 6,352 warnings, down from 7,474.

A major deterrent for would-be violators is the potential for losing one's hunting and furtaking privileges. Last year, in addition to paying fines, 885 individuals had their license privileges revoked for committing serious violations. An additional 516 individuals lost their privileges for either non-payment of fines or failure to respond to citations. During this period, 1,270 other individuals had their license privileges restored.

An extensive training program was presented to all wildlife conservation officers and deputies on new search and seizure rules established by both Commonwealth and Federal courts.

Construction has been continuing since February 1997 on a new, state-of-the-art digital microwave and low band radio system for the Northwest, Northcentral and parts of the Southwest regions. This improvement to our radio system will provide much needed communications coverage for our field officers, which will improve their efficiency and provide an added measure of safety.

A committee was appointed to explore the possibility of providing a new and more functional uniform for wildlife conservation officers and deputies. Although the committee's work is ongoing, a new style winter coat was selected and issued in the fall of 1999.

Bureau personnel continue to review, process and issue a growing number of special

permit applications. Special permits are issued to qualified persons for a wide range of activities, including dog training areas, regulated hunting grounds, bird banding, taxidermy, wildlife pest control and other activities requiring close regulation in order to adequately protect the resource and other public interests. This program increased by over 4,000 permits last year, making a total of more than 26,000 permits on active status in 33 different categories. Although these permits generated more than $320,000 in application and renewal fees, the agency has been unable to recoup its administrative costs under the current fee schedule. In addition to streamlining regulations and procedures, the bureau has been exploring options for increasing the fees for many of these permits.



A NEW radio system will provide much needed communications coverage for officers in the western part of Pennsylvania.

Protecting wildlife resources includes functions such as providing fencing to qualified persons, under very specific conditions, to help prevent damage from deer, elk and bear. Providing the fencing, or cost sharing the construction, often dissuades landowners from dispatching animals causing property damage. During 1998-99 the commission expended $184,174 for 29 deer and elk deterrent fences and $1,860 for nine bear deterrent fences.

The Game and Wildlife Code allows for reimbursement to citizens who have suffered damage by bears to livestock, poultry, bees and beekeeping equipment. Last year, $8,500 was paid to qualified persons for bear damage.

Administrative hearings were conducted for 41 individuals who requested a review of commission regulatory actions that they felt were unjust. Thirty-five of these hearings were related to the revocation of hunting privileges resulting from Game and Wildlife Code violations.

In conclusion, we have been working diligently with the General Assembly, sportsmen's organizations and other stakeholder groups to both simplify wildlife laws and regulations for the public and, at the same time, provide adequate statutory protection for the wildlife resource.

Human Resources

The commission recognizes our employees and volunteers are the agency's most valuable resource. To carry out an effective wildlife management program, we must address the needs of recruiting, training, placing and maintaining a competent and effective work force that will best meet the goals and objectives of our organization and the public we serve. As we meet these goals and objectives, we will provide equal employment opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

Goal: Recruit and develop a competent and effective workforce to protect and manage the commonwealth's wildlife resources.



TWO CLASSES of game conservation officer trainees have been conducted almost back-to-back. Here members of the 24th class, which graduated in March of 1999, studies mammalogy at Shippensburg University.

1998-99

Due to a large number of retirements and resulting field vacancies, it was necessary to recruit and train two classes of wildlife conservation officer trainees almost back-to-back. The 24th Class, consisting of 13 new officers, graduated from their 40-week training program on March 13, 1999. Then, on June 1, 1999 the 25th Class, consisting of 27 trainees, enrolled and is slated for graduation in March 2000.

The Game Commission normally appoints and trains new deputy wildlife conservation officers every year. The 1999 training program, however, was not held. This was in consideration of the many recommendations made by the Deputy Program Review Committee on ways to improve the selection, training and management of our volunteer deputy force. We look forward to a revitalized program being operational in 2000.



WCO TIM GRENOBLE conducts a wildlife forensics course for members of the 25th Class, scheduled for graduation in March 2000.

The American Red Cross "When Help is Delayed Program" was incorporated into our first aid training for all field personnel. This program trains employees to apply advanced techniques to injured persons when professional emergency assistance is unlikely to be available within 30 minutes.

Administrative Services

The business of wildlife management in the private sector must be operated as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will continue to develop an up-to-date financial management system that is compatible with state government mandates and procedures and best business practices.

Goal: Provide fiscal responsibility and financial accountability for the agency and help all employees and volunteers perform their duties efficiently and effectively.

The agency continues to purchase goods and contract services in the most efficient manner possible under state government guidelines.

Currently we're looking into selling licenses and promotional items through the PGC web site. The will certainly be a convenience to license buyers and other customers, and increase revenue. Transactions will be deposited on a daily basis, which will result in additional interest earned.

Participating again in the Electric Deregulation Program, this year we will be partnering with other commonwealth agencies, which should result in a much lower rate.

In another cost-saving venture, we are enrolling agency personnel in the Turnpike Credit Card Program, which will eliminate the need for employees to pay turnpike tolls and then be reimbursed for them. This will make it easier on employees and reduce administrative costs and paperwork.

In 1998-99, the Game Commission received $6,582,874 in Pittman-Robertson Funds,

and devoted them to habitat management and maintenance activities on state game lands and cooperative public access properties. PR funds are derived from an 11-percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition and archery equipment and a 10-percent tax on handguns, and apportioned to the states based upon a ratio combining land area, license sales and total population.

In March of 1999, an independent comprehensive audit of the Game Commission's Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program was conducted, and the results will be discussed in future reports. Also, a 5-year inspection of all Game Commission lands purchased with Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act monies was conducted. The commission has used these funds to purchase 53 parcels of game lands and provide supplemental monies to fund Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area and Shohola Falls (SGL 180) in Pike County.

Licensing

The modern day conservation movement originated with license buyers and the money they paid for those privileges. The licensing of hunters and trappers provides approximately 50 percent of the agency's operating income. Additionally, licensing allows the agency to evaluate and control management programs and monitor public participation.

Goal: Promote cost effective and progressive licensing systems while maintaining simplicity and responsiveness to the license buyer.

Significant improvements to the license application process were made in 1998. To reduce the time and paperwork required to apply for a license, the application and back tag copy were combined into one. To apply for a license, hunters simply present their driver's license or other valid identification to an issuing agent. The agent uses this documentation in addition to verbal information given by the applicant to complete the back tag copy.

For issuing agents, the new procedure reduces the amount of paperwork, freeing up valuable time and storage space. For the Game Commission, the new procedure reduces printing, shipping and storage costs, saving the agency thousands of dollars.

The following licenses were issued for the 1998 license year:

Adult Resident	811,985
Junior Resident	98,233
Senior Resident	46,929
Landowner Resident	1,578
Nonresident Adult	67,386
Nonresident Junior	2,612
Nonresident 7-Day	4,385
Archery	328,451
Muzzleloader	90,421
Migratory Game Bird License	131,178
Antlerless Deer	745,272
Adult Resident Furtaker	21,483
Junior Resident Furtaker	2,721
Senior Resident Furtaker	1,356
Nonresident Adult Furtaker	304
Nonresident Junior Furtaker	13
Resident Bear	112,008
Nonresident Bear	2,759
Senior Lifetime Hunting	4,515
Senior Lifetime Renewal Hunting	33,582
Senior Lifetime Furtaker	121
Total Licenses Sold:	2,507,292
Total Revenue Generated:	$23,905,705



Information Technology

The Game Commission has a strong commitment to information technology and recognizes the tremendous benefits of innovative, technological solutions to information management. This program area services all commission programs and provides a backbone for communication, data analysis, financial operations, statistical analysis, and a variety of other functions essential to operate our agency.

Goal: Provide the latest advances in information technology for solutions to program objectives.

As we approach the next millennium, technology issues abound. From preparing for the year 2000 date change, to use of the Internet and building our agency web page, we have been working at a frenetic pace. Application development demands have also caused the introduction of new technology to our agency. The Correspondence/Complaints Tracking System introduced imaging technology and document management capabilities.

For the past year and a half, we've been preparing for the year 2000. Each computer program was examined, modified when necessary, and tested. The entire mainframe system was tested during a weekend, when the computer dates were changed to the year 2000. Our data communications network software had to be updated for the year 2000, and this also required testing. All personal computers and their software were examined for Year 2000 compliance. All devices that use microchip technology also needed to be checked. Despite all this preparation, we can never be totally sure, so members of our staff will be working the January 1, 2000, weekend to ensure all is up and running for the new millenium.

It is difficult to turn on a TV, look at a billboard or — very soon — look at a vehicle license plate and not find an Internet web address. The Internet and the use of web pages are among the fastest growing communications media. We are taking advantage of this technology by providing our employees with Internet access and building our agency web page to promote our programs. Our web page is filled with wildlife and hunting information, and this is just the beginning. Our goal is to provide one-stop shopping for browsers and researchers interested in Pennsylvania wildlife news and wildlife reference material.

A reliable method to track correspondence and complaints throughout our agency is essential to ensuring that letters are responded to and complaints are investigated. Reporting and query tools are required for proper management. These demands were met this year with the acquisition and implementation of the keyfile document management program. We now electronically scan paper documents into the system and electronically route the documents to the appropriate recipients. All documents are tracked by the administrator to ensure a timely response is made.

Among the challenges we will face in the upcoming year is the implementation of the sale of hunting licenses on our web page, the decision to consolidate our data center, the conversion of our data communications network software, and the conversion of our electronic mail system. As you can see, in this business, the only thing that is constant is change.

PGC FINANCIAL REPORT

Ross E. Starner, Comptroller

July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999

The Balance Sheet and the Statement of Unreserved Fund Balance were prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The unreserved/undesignated balance in the Game Fund on June 30, 1999, computed on a GAAP basis, was $24,776,771, a decrease of $4,526,730 or 15.45 percent from June 30, 1998. Fiscal year 1998-99 revenue collections and prior lapses were exceeded by expenditures resulting in the decrease in the Game Fund balance.

Total fixed assets reported by the Game Commission as of June 30, 1999 were $95,075,933. Fixed assets are reported at cost or estimated historical cost; no depreciation is provided. Donated fixed assets are recorded at fair market value at the time of donation.

All other schedules included in this report were prepared on a cash basis combined with an encumbrance budgetary system, and as such are consistent with that of the previous year.

Actual revenue collected and credited to the Game Fund during the 1998-99 fiscal year was $51,814,899, an increase of $2,513,567 or 5.1 percent over the previous year's actual cash receipts. The increase was primarily due to an increase in wood products sales of $2,989,287, which was due to a favorable market price for cherry wood. Antlerless deer licenses increased by $332,433, mainly due to an increase in license allocations and sales, while nonresident hunting license revenue increased by $254,596.

Offsetting these increases was a decrease of $368,015 in interest on securities and deposits, mainly due to the decrease in the fund balance.

Actual current year operating expenditures and commitments totaled $58,267,735, a decrease of $523,402 or 1 percent from last year. Salary and benefits increased by $1,839,547, while travel and special conference expenses increased by $268,795. A new training class contributed to these increases in expenses. Uniform purchases increased by $180,596, due to purchases for the new training class and non-law-enforcement personnel field wearing apparel.

Offsetting these increases was a decrease in radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance services of $1,933,020. The commission's installation of a radio system in the western region was partly completed.

The Game and Wildlife Code stipulates that at least $1.25 from each resident hunter's paid license fee is to be used solely for the selection, restoration, rehabilitation and improvement of all land under the control of the commission, to provide and improve habitats for the purpose of producing natural propagation of wildlife. The number of resident licenses sold during the 1998-99 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, was 961,662. This mandated that $1,202,077.50 be expended for the above purposes. The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the agency was $3,239,159.74, an excess of $2,037,082.24 over the law's requirement.

The code also states that $2 of each antlerless deer license fee is to be used solely for cutting or otherwise removing overshadowing tree growth to produce underbrush sprouts and saplings for deer food and cover on game lands. Antlerless deer li-



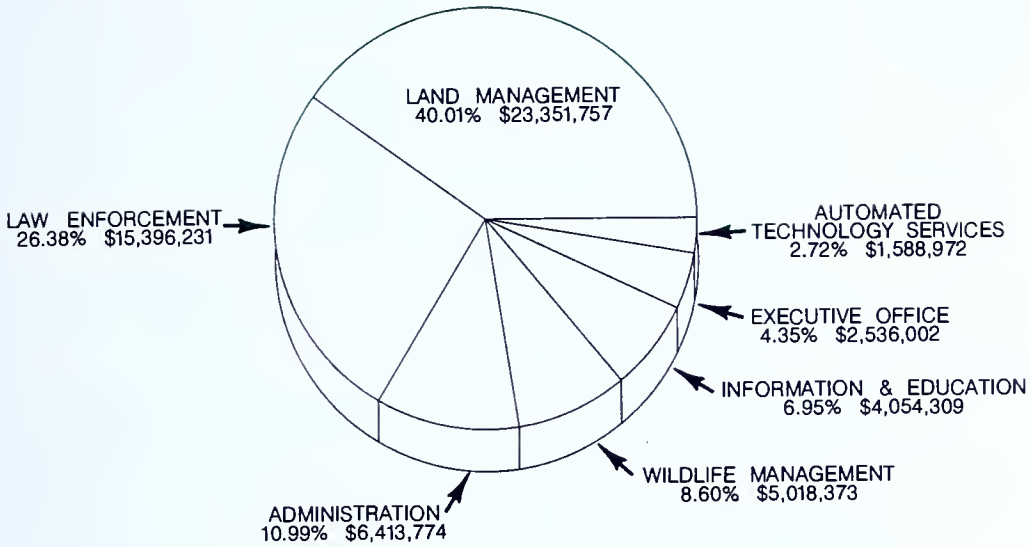
censes sold during the 1998-99 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 745,272. This mandated that a minimum of $1,490,544 be expended for the above mentioned purposes. The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the Game Commission, was $2,579,045.72, an excess of $1,088,501.72 over the requirement. The money collected for the above are now deposited into two separate restricted revenue and expense accounts in accordance with Act 19 of 1996. Expenses in excess of the funds collected are absorbed in the Game Commission operating executive authorization.

Game Fund Balance Sheet
June 30, 1999

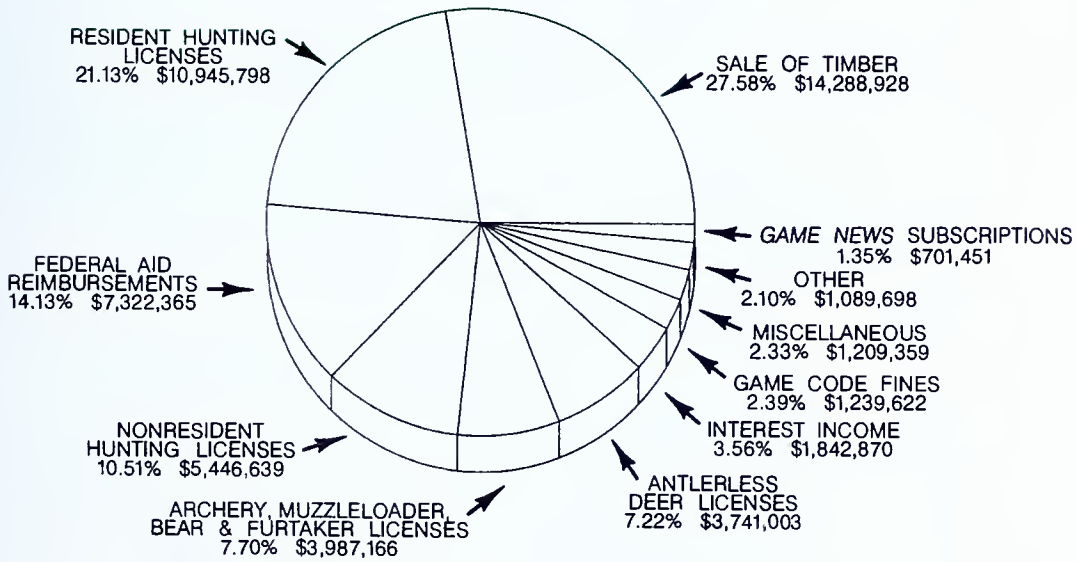
Assets	
Cash with treasurer	$307
Cash in transit	229,875
Cash-advancement accounts	118,204
Investments	28,656,000
Accrued interest receivable	120,009
Grants receivable – federal government	2,126,190
Fixed assets	95,075,933
Due from other funds	166,000
Total Assets	**$126,492,518**
Liabilities	
Vouchers payable	188,412
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	4,160,253
Due to other commonwealth funds	224,000
Due to other governments	145,913
Total Liabilities	**$4,718,578**
Fund Equity	
Reserve for current encumbrances	1,505,454
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue	385,498
Fund balance unreserved/undesignated	24,776,771
Investment in fixed assets	95,075,933
Total Fund Equity	**$121,773,940**
Total Liabilities and Fund Equity	**$126,492,518**

continued on page 24

GAME FUND EXPENDITURES
$58,359,418
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1999



GAME COMMISSION REVENUE
$51,814,899
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1999





1998-99

Game Fund Statement of Unreserved Fund Balance for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1999

Fund Balance - Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 1998		**$29,303,501**
Reserve for restricted receipts, June 30, 1998		30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue, June 30, 1998		477,180
Add: Actual cash receipts July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999	$51,814,899	
Change in fair value of investments July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999	13,000	
Reversal of prior year change in fair value of investments	(43,000)	
Revenue earned as of June 30, 1998 and deposited in 1998-99	(3,146,395)	
Revenue earned but not received as of June 30, 1999		
Due from other funds	166,000	
License & Fees, miscellaneous	229,875	
Interest on short term investment	120,009	
Due from Federal Gov't (Grants)	2,126,190	
Total revenue accrued but not received as of June 30, 1999	2,642,074	
Total revenue earned during '98-99		51,280,578
Lapses from prior year appropriations		3,927,932
Unreserved-Undesignated Fund Balance Before Commitments and Expenditures		**85,019,475**
Deduct: Current year expenditures and commitments posted from 7/1/98 - 6/30/99	58,359,417	
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284	
Reserve for restricted revenue	385,498	
Expenditure accruals as of 6/30/99	4,586,962	
Commitments liquidated against 6/30/99 expenditure accruals	(6,401,029)	
Reversal of prior year commitments and expenditure accrual	3,281,572	
Total expenditures, commitments and reserves		60,242,704
Fund Balance-Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 1999		**$24,776,771**

Schedule of Actual Revenue Deposited in Game Fund Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1999

Licenses and Fees	
Resident hunting — adult	$9,798,129
Resident hunting — junior	493,414
Resident hunting — senior	468,982
Resident lifetime hunting — senior	185,273
Nonresident hunting	5,337,929
Nonresident hunting — junior	108,710
Resident bear	1,095,318
Nonresident bear	71,918
Antlerless deer	3,741,003
Archery	1,628,773
Muzzleloader hunting	447,137

Landowner hunting license	5,146
Nonresident 7-day hunting	65,645
Resident furtaker license — adult	253,541
Resident furtaker license — junior	15,651
Resident furtaker license — senior	14,285
Senior lifetime furtaker license	5,176
Nonresident furtaker — adult	59,703
Nonresident furtaker — junior	7,906
Issuing agents' application fee	33,900
Special game permits	282,203
Right-of-way	450,837
Migratory game bird license	864
Transfer to general habitat improvement	(1,202,078)
Transfer to deer food and cover	(1,490,544)
Total Licenses and Fees	**$21,878,821**
Fines and Penalties	
Game law fines	$1,239,622
Total Fines and Penalties	**$1,239,622**
Miscellaneous Revenue	
Interest on securities & deposits	$1,842,870
Sale of timber & other wood products	14,288,928
Ground rentals & royalties from oil and gas lease	605,090
Sale of *Game News*	701,451
Wildlife promotional publications and materials	63,715
Wildlife nongame fund	106,965
Waterfowl management: stamp sales and art print royalties	27,172
Sale of skins and guns	37,121
Other (game land map sales, sale of coal, sale of grain and hay, SPORT promotional publications, prior year expenditure refunds, sales tax and miscellaneous revenue)	301,737
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	**$17,975,049**
Total Nontax Revenue	**$41,093,492**
Restricted Receipts and Revenue	
Resident license fee – natural propagation of wildlife – general habitat improvement	$1,202,078
Antlerless deer license fee – natural propagation of wildlife – deer food and cover	1,490,544
Total Restricted Receipts & Revenue	**$2,692,622**
Augmentations	
Federal aid	$7,322,365
State augmentations (sale of vehicles, PA conservation corps, donations, streambank fencing, PennDOT reimbursement)	706,420
Total Augmentations	**$8,028,785**
Grand Total All Revenue in Game Fund	**$51,814,899**



Expenditures and Commitments Current Operating Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1999

Salaries and wages	$29,179,924
State share employee benefits and training costs	10,590,447
Land purchases and acquisition costs	26,772
Printing and advertising	1,416,416
Automotive repairs, supplies, and rentals	1,081,187
Payments to local municipalities in lieu-of-taxes	1,665,255
Maintenance and improvements - building, grounds, and machinery	1,682,791
Payments to other state agencies:	
Comptroller services rendered	335,605
Auditing services	97,299
Civil Service and Personnel services	76,251
Purchasing services	92,527
Checkwriting and Disbursement services	16,082
EDP Contractual Services	11,426
Pheasant feed	376,529
Wildlife habitat seedlings and plantings	75,242
Purchase of motor vehicles	1,392,881
Travel and special conference expenses	766,658
Radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance service	3,443,344
Telephone expenses	497,106
Postage	472,935
Heating, power and light	451,119
Legal, appraisal, and consulting fees	1,333,041
Other supplies and services	688,772
Uniforms for Game Commission personnel	241,478
Office equipment, maintenance, rentals, and supplies	280,426
Purchase of equipment and machinery	378,257
Electronic data processing contractual services, rentals, and purchases	585,173
Educational supplies, literature, and classroom training equipment	452,149
Insurance - auto, liability, fidelity	138,269
Clinical services, laboratory and medical supplies	7,909
Payments to individuals for bear damage claims	9,326
Deer fencing	68,632
Payments to nonprofit institutions	28,500
Payments to institutions/individuals for research projects	35,975
Purchasing card expenses	272,032
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	**$58,267,735**
Other restricted expenses:	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	91,682
Grand Total	**$58,359,417**

Game Fund Expenditures and Commitments by Program Area July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999

Executive office	$1,234,312
Comptroller operations	335,605
Assisting other agencies	23,729
Public works program	209,338

General administration	4,310,719
Personnel costs	5,421,704
Warehousing	65,180
Agency purchasing	460,348
Auto acquisition, maintenance, credit card cost	209,685
Office maintenance and services	501,275
Training costs	1,479,828
Licensing program	976,597
800 telephone service	4,972
Information & Education admin. & planning	243,340
Public services	2,458,687
Publications	1,330,668
Hunter-Trapper Education program	407,720
Audio - visual program	365,456
Wildlife management program administration	1,048,468
Game farm operations	2,322,395
Wildlife research support services	42,832
Forest wildlife research program	789,576
Furbearer and farmland research program	260,396
Migratory game bird & waterfowl research program	361,196
Wildlife diversity research management program	213,998
Law enforcement program management & planning	1,576,844
General law enforcement	6,533,801
Animal damage complaints	591,530
Special permits	96,319
In-service training, law enforcement	643,616
Assisting other agencies' law enforcement	16,448
Radio system	3,568,147
General equipment maintenance	167,699
Damage to wildlife	22,072
Endangered species & nongame law enforcement	10,312
Information systems	1,679,545
Land management administration	3,751,784
Environmental review program	262,482
Land acquisition	3,032,181
Howard Nursery management	378,246
Herbaceous openings	1,121,902
Public access programs	1,138,927
Forest management	2,856,773
Food-producing improvements	554,106
Game lands construction & maintenance	4,928,608
Shooting range construction & maintenance	258,369
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	**$58,267,735**
Other restricted expenses :	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	91,682
Grand Total	**$58,359,417**

Pennsylvania Game Commission Schedule of Fixed Assets June 30, 1999

Land and land improvements	$74,776,777
Buildings & building improvements	10,733,100
Machinery and equipment	9,566,056
Total Fixed Assets	**$95,075,933**

THEY FLUTTERED TO THE CITY like drab and nameless moths drawn to the glow in the night sky from the fiery furnaces of a booming post-war steel industry. They came from hardscrabble mountain farms and distant crossroads burgs, from little lumber towns and garden patch villages strung along threadbare roads, where travelers no longer stopped once the new highways were put in. They moved into the crowded warrens along the river or tried to make the best of the replicated clapboard houses that clung impossibly to hillsides, all painted an even red ochre from the dusty air. The sounds of country birdsong was replaced by the perpetual screech of steel wheels on rails and the concussion of boxcars coupling echoed through the river valley like the popping of iron vertebrae in the great spine of commerce.

High above the floodplain, on the broad flat hilltops overlooking the city, the mansions of the lumber kings of an earlier era became the sprawling estates of the industrial barons who refurbished those grand columned homes with all manner of excess. Copper-domed atriums and reflecting pools lined with melodramatic statuary, brick herringbone drives bordered by ornate ironworks and playful topiary. In the cool watersheds far from the city, they built lavish country clubs and sailed on the huge reservoirs that quenched their thirsty mills.



Some quaint country villages held their own, however, far enough from the creep of the expanding populace, yet near enough to reap the benefits of an increasingly mobile society. Brush Valley was one such place, comprised of several stores, a lumberyard, small service businesses, and a gas station and garage where young Jim Price was working under the hood of a '38 Ford coupe.

The station owner, Schultz, banged on the hood. "Quittin' time, Jimmy. That's it for the week. Gotta get to the bank and pick up the missus yet. Here's your paycheck."

The tall, wiry teen wiped his hands on his coveralls and pocketed the check. "Thanks, Mr. Schultz," he said softly.

"Keep up the good work, Jimmy. Looks like you'll have this beauty back on the street in no time, and in a couple more pays I won't be takin' the balance out of your checks. You sure got some talent with cars." Large wet flakes blew into the open bay, beading and running down the sloping black fenders. "Snow for tomorrow. Know what you'll be doin'," said Schultz while swinging an imaginary shotgun. "Let me give you a lift home."

"That's okay. You got things to do. I don't mind the walk."

"Suit yourself, kid. See ya bright and early Monday. And, if you could spare a couple rabbits for some pot pie, just remember old Schultzie here." The round man laughed, rubbing his stomach.

Jim strode up the mountain road, head down against the slanting flakes. The long strides of a field hunter, his face expressionless, like that of a comfortable passenger riding securely in a trusted vehicle. When he passed the second farm, the black shiny road gave way to snow covered gravel. A faint musk of skunk. After another mile the gravel ended, the road rising steeply as a rutted dirt lane that curved up to his farm on the mountaintop. Full dark now, the heady scent of leaf litter and indescribable odor of odorless snow. Inside, his beagles bayed. He flicked on the lights. Electric all the way up here now, put in last year just after his father passed on.

Tip and Molly ran crazy circles around the overgrown yard then scrambled up onto the porch and into the kitchen. He stroked and talked to the little beagles. Soft, merry

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

THE EDGES of HEAVEN

Bob Sopchick

eyes, black noses, each panting and laughing. He fed the dogs first, before he ate. "Sleep good you two, we'll run 'em hard tomorrow."

The morning dawned gray and foggy. He filled the sagging shell loops on the canvas vest and dressed. Tattered brush pants with a pattern of wipe marks from a knife, greasy red leather cap — more brown than red — pulled down over the shock of yellow hair. He shucked open a well cared for '97 Winchester that was his grandpa's gun and his father's, now his. Quicksilver in his hands, though a bit short. The trio headed out into the misty sea of weed fields and brush piles. Jim was a skilled woodsman and gifted shot, his beagles renowned for their prowess and faultless obedience to their young master.

Jim's mother had died when he was a child, and soon after, his father gave up farming to work in the lumbermill. The farm quickly reverted to weeds and brush-filled hollows, the orchard went wild, the woods blending into the fields, and this suited the budding hunter just fine. Jim was too young to serve when the war broke out, and by the time he graduated in '48, it was all over. A month after graduation and his father's tragic accident at the mill, Jim was on his own. The farm had been his grandfather's and paid for long ago. He had some insurance money and hired on full-time at the busy garage. He loved the farm, but lately felt disenfranchised, set apart from a world that he felt was passing him by. He often thought of selling it and moving to the city. Lots of jobs there, especially for someone with his mechanical skills.

The sharp yelps of the beagles knifed through the dense winter air as a rabbit squirted out of a brushpile. It flew like a wild spark, coaxed from the solemn earth by the little dogs that hailed and heralded the fleeing ember that ran before them, driving it back around to their master, who swatted it from the air as it sailed over a crumbled stone wall. Jim held the warm supple form in his hand, watched the dark eye glaze, then knelt and let the dogs sniff it, telling them things they loved to hear.

Monday morning Jim walked into the garage office carrying a bucket with two rabbits inside, wrapped in newspaper and setting on ice. Schultz was at the counter, drinking coffee with a man in a neat pin-striped suit. At the pumps was a glistening green Nash Airflyte Ambassador.



"So you're Jim Price, the rabbit hunter I've been hearing about," said the stranger, extending a hand.

"I hunt some," said Jim.

"My name is Gaines, and I represent Mr. Harold Bartram from in the city." He handed Jim a card. "Mr. Bartram would like to enlist your services to guide him on a hunt. He is a man with little time, but enjoys the sporting life, and is looking for some local recreation. Mr. Bartram would enjoy the privilege to hunt on your farm and, of course, would pay for your time. He has an open slot Wednesday morning, and with your approval, can meet you at your place."

"I work Wednesday, but if he wants to come huntin' with me on Saturday, he's welcome. And I don't need to be paid to go huntin'."

"No, no, no, make it Wednesday," Schultz butted in. "Jim can have the day off."

"I guess it's okay then," said Jim. "Nothin' fancy, though, just rabbits and some grouse, maybe a pheasant."

"Fine. Mr. Bartram will be delighted. We'll be there at daybreak."

The Nash pulled away and Schultz whistled. "Hoo, boy. You know who Bartram is?"

"Works in the steel business, I guess."



"My dear friend," Schultz said, imitating Gaines, "Mr. Harold Bartram *is* the steel business."

Jim heard the car scraping and spinning on the rutted lane before he saw it, then watched the mud flecked Nash pull into the farmyard. Gaines opened the rear door, and out stepped the stout but powerfully built Mr. Harold Bartram. He was ruddy-faced, with a fierce red moustache and wire glasses, looking for all the world like Teddy Roosevelt. Camelhair shooting jacket, plus fours tucked into shiny black boots, a necktie. "A necktie," said Jim to the dogs. "Least he ain't wearin' a pith helmet." Molly looked up at him. "If he says 'Bully!' even one time we're comin' back in."

Bartram pumped Jim's hand. "Great to be out, and in the middle of the week no less! Busy times, James! Appreciate your company and generosity." Bartram strode about, surveying the farm, noisily inhaling great volumes of air through his nose. "Looks like we'll be hunting tight cover today. Let's go with Purdey No. 2, Gaines, the open bore gun." Gaines unbuckled the straps of an oak and leather motor case and assembled a magnificent shotgun that glowed with a life of its own. It's twin, No.1, lay in the velvet lined case. "Daylight's burning, let's go!" said Bartram, charging down the lane behind the dogs, Gaines on his heels bearing the shotgun.

Jim whistled sharply, and the dogs turned back. Jim walked up to the men. "Here's the way it goes, Mr. Bartram. Gaines here is gonna stay behind. We'll work these fields my way," and he described the plan for the morning hunt. They set out again, Jim's one stride to Bartram's two.

As they rounded a corner to the orchard, a grouse flushed back into the woods. Purdey No. 2 flashed and the grouse tumbled into the leaves on the other side of a boggy culvert.

"Nice shot, Harry!" Jim said excitedly. "Mr. Bartram, I mean."

Bartram smiled and broke the gun open. "Well," he said.

"Well what?"

"The bird, son, the bird."

"I don't fetch game, and neither do these dogs. You shoot it, you get it."

Bartram pushed through the greenbriar, grunting, then slogged through the culvert and back again, handing the ruff to Jim.

"Cock grouse," said Jim, handing it back to him. "Stick it in your own coat. You shoot it, you carry it."

Throughout the morning the dogs put on a stellar performance, and Jim was proud of them. Jim was pleased that Bartram matched each of his successful shots with one of his own, then, to his amusement, realized Bartram was competing with him. At the farthest reaches of the farm they took a break on a log pile and the dogs rested. Jim unwrapped a half dozen rabbit legs, some rat cheese and buttered crackers, poured coffee from a small thermos. "Forget your lunch?"

Bartram nodded, wiped his lips, cleared his throat.

"Well, get yourself some of this then."

He watched Bartram quickly devour two rabbit legs, sucking the bones clean the way he probably did with the bones of his business competitors. His camelhair jacket looked like chainmail, encrusted with beggar-ticks and burrs, wipe marks from the knife after gutting his rabbits. The thin silk necktie now served as a game carrier, strung through the hocks of the rabbits, knotted around the neck of the grouse.

Bartram stood, his eyes sparkling, and scratched behind Molly's ear. "You know, I've been all over; African safaris for the big five, and at night, champagne dinners and violins on the Veldt. A tiger from a *machan* in India, driven birds in Scotland. The best guides, gunbearers, loaders, skinners, trackers. But I never really *hunted*, not until today. Tell you what, James, I have a proposition for you. I'd like to buy this place, all of it, and make it a private shooting grounds. Everything's just right. The best part is, I want you to head it up, with a decent salary to boot. We'll tear down that lobster trap house and build you a fine warm quarters in the clubhouse. A kennel with pointing dogs, gamebird pens, a riding stable. Think hard on this James, I am dead serious. I'll send Gaines by for your answer on Saturday."

Jim sat for a long time on the porchsteps, long after the red taillights of the Nash dipped over the hill. He looked out at the eternal fields, listened to a cockbird crow, saw a trio of deer ghost through the orchard. He held Tip under his arm, scratching his chest, the air electric with possibility.

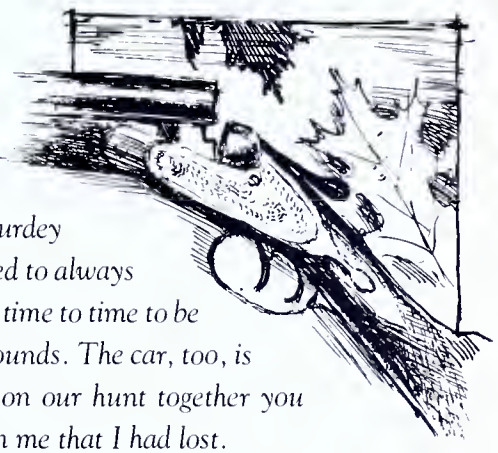
Saturday evening Gaines pulled into the farmyard, followed by Jim's black coupe with Schultz behind the wheel. Jim handed Gaines the much edited note he had written to Bartram on tablet paper. Schultz gave the keys of the Ford to Jim and told him to drive it in on Monday and slapped him on the shoulder, climbed into the back of the Nash and waved as Gaines pulled away.

Jim got in the coupe, adjusted the mirror and saw a gun case in the back seat. He opened the case and in it was Bartram's Purdey No. 1 and a note with a waxed seal.

Dear James,

I knew what your answer would be before you did. It is my business to know such things, and you have made the right decision. The farm should remain what it is, what it always was, and with God's grace, so should you. I noticed that your Winchester was a bit short for you, so please accept Purdey No. 1 as a token of my gratitude. I would be honored to always serve as a No. 2 gun to you any day, and hope from time to time to be invited back to hunt with you and your wonderful hounds. The car, too, is finally yours. You did a fine job restoring it, and on our hunt together you should know that you helped to restore something in me that I had lost.

Your friend, H.B.



Jim walked to the house with the shotgun under his arm and the dogs at his heels. From the porch he looked at the distant smear of pale light from the city in the eastern sky, knowing that soon enough it would all be here, even way up here on the edges of heaven.

First Time's A Charm

By Daniel A. Lynch

THE ONLY way I can describe the feelings of that morning is to ask you to remember being eight years old and waking up on Christmas morning, before anyone else in the house, and running downstairs to open that special present in the brightly colored box with your name on it next to the tree.

That is how I felt on a cold January day last year. I was walking in waist-high water, following my trapping partner Cheryl Trewella. We were within 10 feet of our first beaver set when I mentioned to Cheryl that I didn't see the sticks we had placed at our set to steady our conibear trap. Less than two seconds later Cheryl was looking back at me with her eyes about to pop out of her head and she screamed, "We got one!" That moment was the beginning of two of the most exciting months of trapping I've ever had.



CHERYL TREWELLA with her and Dan's first "flattail," taken during their first season of trapping for beavers.

I've been trapping since I was 12 years old, and I trap only for the fun of it. My wife, Donna, would be the first to say that I'll never make a profit at my hobby, because I'm constantly spending money on all kinds of trapping necessities. Yet I had no idea how much fun I was missing until this past year, when I started trapping beavers.

Most of my trapping had been for muskrats and raccoons, but lately I've managed to take red foxes and even a mink. All of my catches have been special to me, and I cherish the time spent outdoors, whether it's just looking for animal sign along creeks and in fields or actually setting traps.

As a Wildlife Education Specialist for the Game Commission and a deputy WCO in Berks County, I'm able to spend a fair amount of time in the field observing animals and their sign. This also allows me to teach people of all ages about animal characteristics and ways to identify the needs of animals in a variety of habitats.

My trapping partner, Cheryl, also works for the Game Commission, as the Southeast Region Information and Education Supervisor. Cheryl really deserves the credit for our first beaver catches. She did most of the legwork required to find trapping locations. Prior to becoming a super-

visor, Cheryl was the WCO in upper Bucks County for 11 years. With her past experience in the area, and updated information from the local deputies and Bucks County WCO, Cheryl had several locations pinpointed to scout for beaver sign.

On a mild weekend in early January, Cheryl and her two children tromped through the "wilds" of Bucks County. Even amidst housing developments and shopping malls, some wild places and beautiful country can still be found there.

On Sunday night of that weekend I received a call from a very excited prospective beaver trapper. Cheryl told me that she not only found definite beaver sign, but that she also thought we might have at least three trapping locations, all with fresh beaver cuttings. I was psyched. I couldn't wait until the following weekend, when we would drive to Bucks County and talk to landowners where the beavers were located.

The next weekend we contacted one landowner who was elated that we were interested in trapping beavers, because they were flooding a large portion of his property. We also had a location on a game lands that held an enormous beaver lodge but required a rather long hike from the nearest parking lot. Because of our jobs, our trapping had to be done on weekends. We planned to leave work on Friday afternoon, set until dark, check our sets Saturday morning then pull them on Sunday morning. Our hopes were high for the following weekend, because we had two locations to set and it was our first try at this type of trapping.

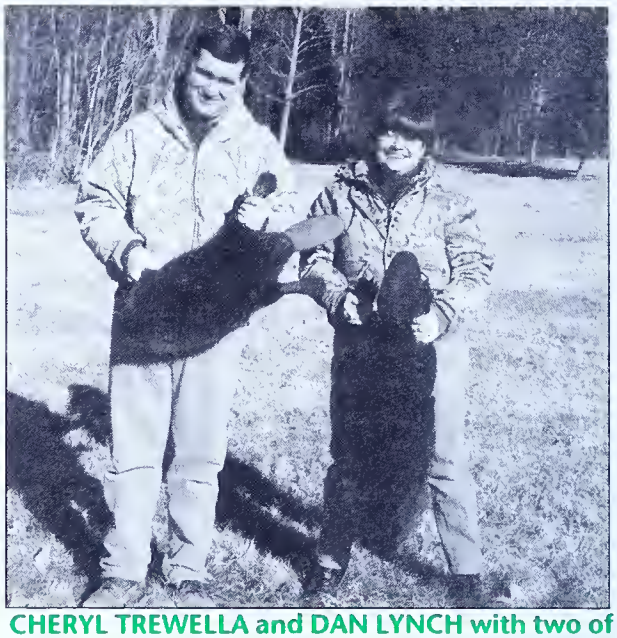
Just like in hunting, weather plays a huge role in trapping. Due to the forecast, our first weekend was doomed to failure. We made our first conibear sets and a pole trap set through the ice, which was at least five inches thick. We were relying heavily on set locations and types of sets that we had read about in various magazines and books. During that first night, incredible thunderstorms dropped huge amounts of water, flooding our creek location and basically ruining our first weekend of trapping. We accepted the setback as just a case of bad luck and hoped the following weekend would be better.

As soon as we stopped at our first location, a passing motorist stopped to lecture us on all the negative aspects of taking "his" beavers. Unfortunately, he didn't stick around long enough for us to tell him why we were trapping and that it was not only perfectly legal, but that the landowner actually wanted some of the beavers removed. He stayed only long enough to call us some choice names and tell us he would contact the "park rangers." We were concerned about him returning later to steal our traps, but we figured he probably couldn't walk to the same locations we were trapping, because he didn't look like the kind of person who owned chest waders. After a good laugh we went about making our sets.

We placed several #330 conibears along swimming lanes, and created a castor mound set and placed a #3 foot trap there. With this type of set, a mud pie, the size of an upside down cereal bowl placed near the water's edge, attracts the beaver. On top of the mud pie, we placed several drops of a commercially prepared beaver castor that comes from the castor gland located near a beaver's tail. Beavers smell the foreign scent placed on the mound, go to the area to investigate and put their own scent on the mound to claim the territory as their own. A foot trap is placed in about one foot of water directly in front or slightly off center of the scent mound. The trap is attached to a wire cable fastened to some object on land. A weight on the other end of the cable is placed in at least three to four feet of water. There is a one way locking mechanism attaching the trap to the cable, allowing the trap to go only down the wire into

deeper water. If the beaver steps in the trap it immediately heads for deep water and then drowns.

After placing our traps we left for the evening with higher hopes than the previous weekend. This particular weekend had greeted us with cold weather, but there was no ice and beaver sign was evident all around our locations. The lodge we were trapping near was littered with freshly chewed sticks. Because neither of us had ever done this before, our goal was to catch at least one beaver. We would be surprised, though.



CHERYL TREWELLA and DAN LYNCH with two of their five beavers they trapped in Bucks and Schuylkill counties last year.

I didn't sleep much that evening. It was like the feeling I get prior to the first day of buck season. I was up and ready to go by 6:30, and we were on the road by 7 o'clock. We didn't talk much on the way, afraid we would jinx our chances of catching a beaver. We felt our sets looked good, but that was the opinions of two inexperienced beaver trappers. It didn't take long for us to find out, as described at the beginning of this story.

After looking over our first ever beaver — a 33-pound specimen — and jumping up and down and "high-fiving" each other, we realized we had more traps to check. We both stared in disbelief at our castor mound set. We were both looking at the place where our trap used to be and tried to decide who was going to pull up the guide wire. I got to do the honors, and with total amazement we both stood silently staring at our second beaver, a 17-pound beauty caught securely by the front foot and held exactly like the photos in our guide books. We were elated. We were immediately on the cell phone, telling our families back in Berks County of our success.

In the next few weeks we took five beavers in two different locations in Bucks County, and one real nice beaver on a game lands in northern Schuylkill County. We had a great time and learned an awful lot about reading sign.

If you've never given beaver trapping a try and would like to, contact a local trapper or conservation officer and ask a lot of questions. Above all, I hope you have fun in the outdoors and, just like our experience, maybe you're first attempt at beaver trapping will be a charm. □

FIELD NOTES

Picked it Up Somewhere

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field training assignment with WCO Frank Dooley, I was instructed to field-dress a roadkilled deer, so the meat could be given to a needy family. It was late at night, so I had to do the dirty work using a flashlight. When I had finished, WCO Dooley asked how it was that I was so good at field-dressing a deer at night using only a flashlight. Honest, Mr. Dooley, it was the first time I had ever done it.

— TRAINEE JONATHAN M. WYANT, HARRISBURG



It was a Mistake, Honest

MCKEAN — Deputy Jim Rankin and I were at his farm getting ready to go out on patrol when we spotted three turkeys in his cornfield. As turkeys were in season, Jim decided to collect his Thanksgiving dinner. He grabbed his gear and started up to the field, so I got into my vehicle but hit my siren by accident. After shutting it off I looked at Jim, but not being sure which turkey Jim intended to shoot, I hightailed it out of there.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Wrong Fowl

CHESTER — Deputy Larry Henck and I were patrolling on SGL 43 when a man stopped and asked if we had stocked pheasants, because he had just seen four hens in a parking area. I informed him that the Food & Cover Corps had released hen pheasants the previous week. As we drove into the parking lot we saw four chickens wandering around. I wonder if there was a mix up at the Game Farm, or if the man needed glasses?

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, GLENMOORE

Hope So

VENANGO — While sprucing up boundary markers and clearing brush from the corner markers on SGL 39, game land maintenance supervisor Emma Atha encountered a bear on the trail. Every time she tried to get closer to the line markers, the bear would amble toward her. Each time she shooed it away, it would come back. Emma thought there might have been cubs around, but she never did see any. So after several unsuccessful attempts to get around the bear, Emma decided the work would keep until another day, adding, "The boss will understand."

— WCO LEO C. YAHNER, FRANKLIN

Tooth and Fang

Over the years I've seen snakes devour bats, hawks catch prey, a fight between a sharp-shinned hawk and a grouse, and many other predator/prey battles. Recently, though, I watched a weasel chase a very frantic chipmunk under a pine tree then emerge victorious. The weasel looked like a miniature African lion as it proudly pranced back into the woods with its hard-earned prize.

— WES RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Jailbird

WESTMORELAND — I was sent to help remove a big buck from within the United Postal Service compound in New Stanton. It seems the deer jumped the fence that completely surrounds the grounds, but would not jump it again to get back out. Its only other exit was at the guard shack, nearly a quarter-mile away from where the buck had bedded down. The employees came up with a plan to strategically locate people along a route that would keep the buck moving along the fence and funnel it to the gate. The plan worked great, and as several employees watched for traffic at the road, the deer went through the gate, crossed the road, started into a cornfield, then made a quick turn and went directly into a Kenworth dealer's fenced-in lot.

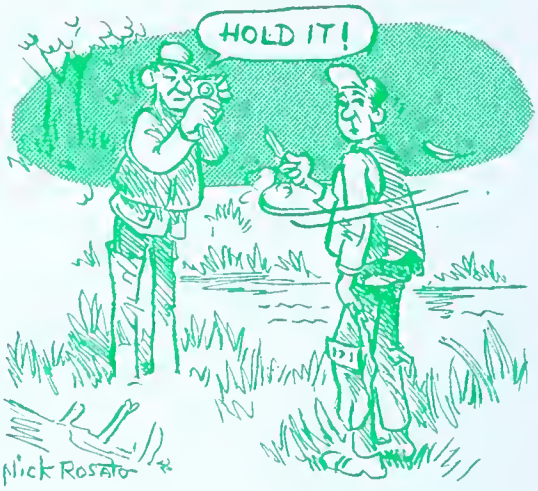
— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK



Did What He was Told

CUMBERLAND — Deputy Ed Cline and I were patrolling SGL 169 when we came across some hunters from Virginia who had shot a pheasant that fell into a pond. The group's Lab wouldn't swim out to get the bird, so they threw a stick into the water, thinking that the dog, while retrieving the stick, would grab the pheasant. The plan seemed to be working until the dog swam right past the pheasant, grabbed the stick and returned it to its owner.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE



What are the Odds?

ERIE — While on field assignment here, Trainee Robert Einodshofer got to do some duck hunting for the first time. After missing several shots, he managed to bag a nice drake wood duck at the end of the day. I told him to hold his duck while I took a photo, but when he took the duck from his game pouch, it flew away, leaving him with nothing but a few tail feathers and a strange look on his face.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Just Having Fun

BRADFORD — I received a call from Kathy Scheithauer of Towanda about a bear that had knocked down her bird feeder, upset the garbage cans and removed the cover from her swimming pool. A typical nuisance bear call until Kathy said the bruin climbed up on the trampoline and bounced all over.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Can't "Bear" It

TRAINING SCHOOL — Several of us trainees were abruptly awakened at 2 a.m. by one of our roommates. It seems he was dreaming as he jumped out of bed screaming, "Let me out, don't leave me in the bear trap." Don't worry, Rod, we won't leave you in any bear traps, and I won't tell anyone about this.

— TRAINEE MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, HARRISBURG

Not a Chance

CRAWFORD — After spending a day stocking pheasants with WCO John McKellop, we stopped at his house to drop off his trailer. John quickly noticed that his beehives had been knocked over and damaged by a bear, so he began setting the hives back up while I stayed well out of harm's way. I did suggest that he put on his bee keeping apparel, because he was either practicing a new disco dance or getting repeatedly stung. About 10 minutes and a couple dozen stings later, John finished. He asked me if I had ever considered keeping bees for a hobby.

— LMO KEITH E. HARBAUGH, MEADVILLE

Action Packed

SOMERSET — The first day of archery season was a beautiful fall day, and while checking hunters I noticed an abundance of wildlife. Twenty-three deer were seen, including three bucks, 11 turkeys, too many doves to count and a lone wood duck drake; all were seen before 8:30 a.m.

— WCO DANIEL W. JENKINS, BERLIN

It's All in a Name

I've always believed that wildlife conservation is serious business. So I'm a little concerned when a glance at our field roster reveals the names Steve Martin, Tim Conway and the Marks Brothers. Then again, I also believe that a good sense of humor is a real asset in this profession. Right, guys?

— LMO JAMES R. BINDER, KLEINFELTERSVILLE

Big Appetite

GREENE — Successful spring gobbler hunter Shorty Wycoff told me that his double-bearded gobbler weighed 23 pounds. When field-dressing the bird, Shorty found 53 17-year cicadas. Considering the large size of these insects, I'd say that was one turkey that was stuffed long before it went in the roaster.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Kids Don't Lie

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field training assignment with WCO Dave Stewart, I was at his home one night just before going out to patrol. When his 7-year-old daughter asked me where we were going, I jokingly said to go catch some bad guys. She promptly snickered and said, "No you're not, you're just going out to pick up dead things."

— TRAINEE DARREN DAVID, HARRISBURG

Have to Try That One

YORK — I went duck hunting with WCO Chuck Lincoln, and after helping to put out the decoys I went back to the blind and proceeded to sit on my glasses, which I had laid on the bench to clear after being fogged up from our long hike in. I told Chuck to not let me shoot a protected bird in mistake for a duck. One way to look at it, though, was that I finally had an alibi for missing.

— WCO G.C. HOUGHTON, EMIGSVILLE



Wily Coyote?

POTTER — Retired LMO Dave Brown told me about a coyote on his property last summer that just couldn't catch a break. It seems the coyote stalked some turkeys, only to be chased by the flock. Then it tried to sneak up on a fawn and was chased away by a big doe.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT



Not Taught in Class

CLINTON — Trainee Rich Danley learned two valuable lessons while dealing with a treed bear: First, when the tranquilizing drug is administered, one of the first muscles to relax is the one that controls the bladder. And second, either stand clear or carry an umbrella.

— WCO KEN PACKARD, MILL HALL

Modern Times

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field assignment in Indiana County with WCO Jack Lucas, we had two high school students on a "ride-along" program one day. We spent most of the day walking beaver survey routes, and when WCO Lucas asked the two young men if they had ever used a GPS unit before, one of them answered, "Yea, on the Big Game Hunter video game."

— TRAINEE WES STAUFFER, HARRISBURG

Appreciated

BUCKS — The Bucks County 4th Annual Youth Field Day held in September was again a success, with more than 200 youngsters in attendance. The Youth Field Day provides youngsters with the opportunity to participate in many different outdoor activities. A special thanks goes out to the many volunteers who make this day possible.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM, NEW BRITAIN

Good Catch

NORTHUMBERLAND — Deputy Barry Cooper was checking small game hunters when he found that one man had a 16-gauge shell in the barrel of a 12-gauge shotgun, with a 12-gauge shell chambered right behind it. The hunter could have been seriously injured or even killed if he had pulled the trigger. So, the next time you get checked by a WCO, remember that we are concerned about hunter safety; don't look at it as if we are trying to ruin your hunt. Your life may be the next one we save.

— WCO DIRK B. REMENSNYDER, SUNBURY .

Good Advice

BEDFORD — Mike Wood of Archers & Anglers shop in Everett told me that a man who had just purchased a crossbow through the mail came into his shop to try it out on the range. The man apparently held the crossbow incorrectly, because on the first shot the string cut off the end of his thumb. With the increasing popularity of crossbows for physically challenged hunters, users should make sure they clearly understand how the equipment works before trying it. Then, after shooting their first bullseye, they'll be able to give a "thumbs up" sign to their buddies.

— WCO DANIEL S. YAHNER, EVERETT

Good Thing

BRADFORD — I was in charge of the orienteering course at a Becoming an Outdoor-Woman program last summer when I overheard some ladies talking about an incident that had occurred in one of the cabins. It seems one of the women had returned to her room to find her belongings missing. Voicing her displeasure at the nerve of someone who would do this, she realized that she was in the wrong room. She was overheard muttering as she was leaving, "It's a good thing I'm taking that compass course tomorrow.

— WCO RICHARD P. LARNERD, WARREN CENTER

Waste Not

DELAWARE — It's perfectly legal to pick up a roadkilled deer if you notify the PGC within 24 hours. It's not legal, however, to take antlers from roadkilled deer. We use the antlers for programs, and some racks are sold with the monies placed in the Game Fund and used for purchasing more lands for public hunting, HTE class supplies and other equipment.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, EDGEMONT

Handful

TRAINING SCHOOL — During my first week of field training I helped pick up 14 deer and one bear killed on area roads. This didn't allow me much time to use the skills I learned in school, though.

— TRAINEE HAROLD J. MALEHORN, HARRISBURG



Hope it Will Fly

TRAINING SCHOOL — One of our projects while in the field was to collect five sets of lower jaws from roadkilled deer to use in displays demonstrating how deer are aged. Two such jaws that I had collected and placed on WCO Jim Brown's back porch mysteriously disappeared. It was later discovered that Jim's black Lab made off with them. I wonder if my instructors will believe that the dog really did eat my homework?

— TRAINEE WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, HARRISBURG

Wish Came True

TRAINING SCHOOL — My dad often told me about how plentiful pheasants were in his day, and what a thrill it was when a big group of birds would flush at the end of a field. Many times he said he wished I could experience that thrill. Last fall I got to stock pheasants with WCO Dan Yahner, and seeing 240 pheasants flush from the crates simultaneously was a thrill indeed. I hope Dad was watching.

— TRAINEE GERALD L. SMITH, HARRISBURG

That'll Teach Him

BERKS — I was helping a certain Food and Cover Corp worker stock pheasants, when he mentioned the lack of Field Notes attributed to fellow workers. At the very next farm, after being warned about the freshly spread manure, he proceeded to back up into it and got the truck stuck. Now, Tim, you've got your Field Note.

— WCO ROBERT L. PRALL, WEST LAWN

Good Camo

CUMBERLAND — Barry Walters was in his treestand during archery season when he heard two squirrels barking behind him. As he turned his head to see what they were fussing about, he felt something strike his head. Reaching up he nearly grabbed a red-tailed hawk that had tried to perch on his noggin.

— WCO TIM M. GRENOBLE, CARLISLE

Hooked

My friend Dave took his 13-year-old nephew, Bradley, with him while archery hunting. Bradley, visiting from Orlando, Florida, had never been hunting. It wasn't long until a group of deer paraded past the treestand, and Dave shot a nice doe. Bradley was beside himself. When Bradley's mother asked him what was the best thing he did on vacation, Bradley responded, "The hunt wasn't only the best thing I did on vacation, it was the most fun I ever had in my life."

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Bowhunter education program unveiled

THE GAME COMMISSION and several sponsoring partners have launched Pennsylvania's Bowhunter Education Program to help bowhunters become safer and more accomplished. The new partnership for this voluntary educational program, which is based on the International Bowhunter Education Program (IBEP), was announced during the fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association.

"Bowhunting is not a skill you can learn overnight, but it offers one of the greatest challenges found in all of hunting," said Vern Ross, commission executive director and an avid bowhunter. "Thanks to the outstanding support of our partners, we now will be able to offer a bowhunter education course as part of our hunter education program."

Organizations providing financial and technical sponsorship are: The International Bowhunting Organization, a world-wide group based in Vermillion, Ohio; United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania; Bowhunter's Discount Warehouse, Wellsville; Bowhunter Magazine, Harrisburg; Kinsey's Outdoors, Mount Joy; Lancaster Archery Supply, Lancaster; and The Mellon Foundation, Pittsburgh.

"The future of bowhunting depends upon effective bowhunter education," said Keith Snyder, chief of the agency's Hunter-Trapper Education Division. "IBEP has been offered in Pennsylvania for many years by a group of dedicated volunteers. Under the Game Commission's leadership and with the support of our sponsoring partners, we will bring it to a new level and make it available to more people. The program will focus on instilling in bowhunters a responsible attitude and behavior toward people, wildlife and the environment in which they hunt.

Snyder said the first step in developing this advanced hunter education program is training additional volunteer instructors to teach the IBEP course curriculum — developed by the National Bowhunter Education Foundation. There are nearly 100 NBEF certified instructors in Pennsylvania already, and the Game Commission hopes to recruit an additional 150.

All bowhunter instructors have or will need to successfully complete an IBEP student course, which is a minimum of 10 hours over two days of classroom study and field training. The course covers many subjects, including: bowhunter responsibilities; proper hunting equipment; safety; wildlife conservation and game laws; shooting instruction and shot placement; bowhunting methods, practice and scouting; survival and first aid, specifically as it applies to bowhunting; big game anatomy; recovery of game; and proper care of meat.

Additionally, instructors are re-

quired to attend a one-day IBEP instructor's workshop, which focuses on the training necessary to become an IBEP instructor. Individuals interested in becoming an instructor should contact the Hunter-Trapper Education Division at 717-787-7015 for more information and an application.

Snyder noted that once the program is up and running, hunters who pass the course will not have to take any additional hunter education training when they travel to other states to bowhunt. Course schedules will be announced through news releases and will be posted on the agency's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Originally conceived by William H. Wadsworth of New York in 1969, the National Bowhunter Education Foundation is now a world-renowned, nonprofit educational foundation that develops, implements and administers the IBEP. Endorsed by the International Hunter Education Association, the foundation is guided by a volunteer board of directors who are experienced bowhunters.

PGC deputy/hunter ed instructor honored

WILLIAM L. SIPPLE JR., a veteran Game Commission Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer and Hunter-Trapper Education instructor, was honored with the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association's "Youth Mentor Award" for 1999.

Retired from Penn State University since 1994, the State College resident has been instrumental in developing the 4-H Youth Shooting Sports program involving air pistol, air rifle and shotgun programs, as well as expanding 4-H archery and 22 caliber rifle projects throughout the state.

Sipple heads the riflery portion of Pennsylvania's Youth Hunter Education Challenge event. He sponsors and conducts Junior Olympic Pistol Championships in the state and assists with FFA Week activities in firearms safety and marksmanship.

"I especially enjoy working with young people," said Sipple. He continues as a faculty advisor to the Penn State Rifle Club and is active in Centre County's Youth Field Day programs.



Linda Steiner

WILLIAM SIPPLE received the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association's "Youth Mentor Award" from POWA President Julie Lalo.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Putt wins waterfowl contest a fourth time



WHEN GERALD PUTT was the winning artist in Pennsylvania's annual waterfowl fine art print and stamp contest in 1997, it represented a "hat trick." Now you can add "four-peat" to the Boiling Springs artist's list of accomplishments.

Putt's entry of a pair of green-winged teal entitled "Breaking Out Greenwings" was selected from among 21 entries submitted in the Game Commission's 2000 waterfowl stamp and fine art print design contest.

"The painting shows a pair of green-winged teal flushing from a marsh setting," said Putt, who is celebrating his 20th year as a full-time wildlife artist. "I felt greenwings were ready to win, and I wanted to work with flying birds. In many duck stamp designs, waterfowl is illustrated in a resting pose. I wanted to try something different."

The only other multiple winners of Pennsylvania's fine art waterfowl contest are Tom Hirata (1990 and 1994) and Clark Weaver (1997 and 1999), who is a close, personal friend of Putt. The late Ned Smith was commissioned to paint the 1983 and 1985 duck stamp prints.

Putt's talents are known throughout North America. For 2000-2001, Putt will be a member of Ducks Unlimited's national art package program. His work will be displayed at every DU event held in the United States and Canada. He is one of seven in that national category, selected from an original group of 300 artists.

CRP Sign-up

THE NEXT CRP sign up is **January 18 - February 11**. The purpose of this voluntary program is to remove the most environmentally sensitive and highly erodible land from crop production. The result will be improved wildlife habitat, control of soil erosion, improved air and water quality. Participating landowners and farm operators receive annual cash rental payments for taking their land out of production, and cost share for establishing conservation cover.

The CRP program is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture. No other program holds the potential to improve farmland wildlife habitat like CRP. If every eligible Pennsylvania landowner placed just five percent of his land in CRP, secure habitat for farmland wildlife on 250,000 acres would be provided.

For more information contact your, USDA Farm Services Agency or NRCS office in your county. — *Scott Klinger*

Game Commission produces coloring book

THE GAME COMMISSION has produced a coloring book to acquaint and educate youngsters about Pennsylvania's rich wildlife community. Written and illustrated by Bob Sopchick of York, the 52-page book contains expertly drawn coloring pages and informative text that showcases the commonwealth's wildlife, from white-tailed deer and elk to otters and bald eagles.

The book is divided into five sections: wetlands, forest, farm, neighborhood, and conservation. Learning which wildlife species inhabit the diversity of habitats found throughout the state is one of the key concepts required under the Pennsylvania Department of Education's proposed environment and ecology standards.

"This book will be very helpful to elementary teachers throughout the state," said Theresa Alberici, PGC wildlife education specialist. "Not only will it familiarize young Pennsylvanians with their state's wildlife, it also will help build a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of habitat diversity.

"While in its developmental stages, the book was reviewed by several kindergarten through third grade teachers. Their input was a very important part of this book's development."

The book includes an attractive full-color cover and comes with a full color coloring guide centerfold suitable for display. Also included is a listing of vocabulary words and a guide on ways people can help wildlife.

The book is available to educational institutions and youth organizations. Schools and organizations interested in receiving a sample coloring book or making arrangements to receive classroom quantities are asked to contact the Game Commission region office serving their county.

WCOs carry torch

THE SELECTION process and training of Game Commission wildlife conservation officers continues to produce excellent, professional individuals who serve wildlife and Keystone State citizens. This is evidenced by back-to-back presentations of the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association's Torch Award to PGC officers.

This past summer the coveted NAWEOA Torch Award went to WCO Jack Lucas, who serves a district in Indiana County. The pre-



WCO JACK LUCAS, center, is being congratulated by Southwest Region Wildlife Education Supervisor Joe Stefko for winning the 1999 NAWEOA Torch Award.

sentation was made at the annual NAWEOA convention in St. Louis.

The award is presented annually to an individual who has been a wildlife conservation officer for five years or less. Retired officers within NAWEOA ranks make the award as a symbol of passing the torch. The selection process focuses on a genuine desire to protect the resource and to develop professionally, thus earning the respect of fellow officers and the public.

Lucas graduated with the 23rd Class from the Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1996, and was first assigned to a district in Allegheny County, before transferring to Indiana County. Both districts are within the PGC's Southwest Region.

A fellow graduate of the 23rd RLSC Class, Kevin Thompson, was presented with the Torch Award in 1998. Thompson's first assignment after graduating from the training school was with the Special Investigation Unit in Harrisburg. He later was assigned to Butler County and continues to serve and protect wildlife and the public in that Northwest Region district.

Black bear dies from internal injuries from fall

A BLACK BEAR known as "New Jersey Bear 3," which had been relocated five times after wandering into populated Pennsylvania communities, was found dead on October 20, from internal injuries likely sustained when it was captured in Chester County.

A necropsy indicated that the bear died from internal bleeding and bruising, likely sustained during its capture on October 18. Following a 2-day chase that started in suburban Philadelphia on October 17, the bear had been chased up a tree between Route 202 and Paoli Pike in West Goshen.

While the bear was in the tree it was tranquilized by a local wildlife conservation officer. When the bear awoke three and a half-hours later, no injuries were noticed and it was transported to the Northcentral Region Office in Jersey Shore.

On the morning of October 20, however, when it was to be taken to McKean County pending release, the 400-pound male bear was found dead.

"The bear appeared unusually lethargic," said Warren Q. Stump, law enforcement supervisor for the Northcentral Region. "We held it in a holding pen for observation before releasing it. Unfortunately, due to the internal injuries, the bear died overnight."

Region Office Phone Numbers

Use the following numbers to contact a region office:

Northwest — 814-432-3187
Southwest — 724-238-9523
Northcentral — 570-398-4744
Southcentral — 814-643-1831
Northeast — 570-675-1143
Southeast — 610-926-3136

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

The Game Commission spent an estimated $8,500 to capture and transport the bear five times after it wandered into populated areas. Each time, calls from local residents to local law enforcement departments and the Game Commission prompted its removal.

"As Pennsylvania's black bear range has grown over the past 20 years, bear sightings in populated communities are becoming more common," said Calvin DuBrock, director of the commission's Bureau of Wildlife Management. He noted that in the past 25 years fewer than 10 people have been injured by bears in Pennsylvania, and there are no known records of a Pennsylvania black bear killing a human in any of the eastern coast states. "While black bears needn't be feared, they should not be dismissed as harmless. They simply need to be respected," DuBrock said.

The bear was first captured on April 5, in Bucks County and released on SGL 211 in Pine Grove Township, Schuylkill County. It was captured a second time on May 10, in Lehigh County and released on SGL 264 in Wiconisco Township, in upper Dauphin County.

The third time the bear was captured was on Aug. 13, in Allentown and released in Bald Eagle State Forest, White Buffalo Township, Union County. The fourth time the bear was captured in Bridgeport Borough, Montgomery County on September 29. This time the bear was picked up by New Jersey Fish and Game and returned to New Jersey.

LARRY HOAG, center on the right, enjoys spending his free time making nest boxes with his grandchildren, pictured here with Deputy WCO Bill Cosenza and WCO Rose Luciane, Delaware County. Larry then donates his boxes to the Game Commission, and many are used in various school and other I&E programs.





THE SLEIGHTON school students are one such group that received nest boxes made by Larry. WCO Luciane presented the students, shown here with their instructor Pete Lasavage in the front row, with a duck box and bluebird box kits after presenting a wildlife ID program. Plans call for the boxes to be used as part of a wildlife habitat project on school grounds.

Neville named policy analyst

JOSEPH J. NEVILLE has joined the Game Commission as the agency's policy director. He will review current and proposed Game Commission policies, and assist with drafting and recommending agency positions on legislation.

Neville comes to the PGC after serving as executive director of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs since 1998.

He earned a master's degree in administration/recreation and parks from Eastern Kentucky University in 1984. Prior to that, he received bachelors' degrees in biology and recreation and parks from Penn State University in 1983.

PGC Retirees



J.R. Fagan
Bureau Director
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Harrisburg Headquarters
Marysville
3/29/65–7/9/99



Glenn E. Sanders
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Northwest Region
Emlenton
3/1/80–5/14/99



Barry Ray
Game Lands Officer Mgr.
Bur. Land Management
Harrisburg Headquarters
Rockwood
3/25/68–5/28/99



William E. Drake
Wildlife Biologist 2
Bur. Wildlife Management
Kane
8/15/70–6/25/99



Eugene Cuppett
Game Lands Main. Worker
Southcentral Region
Manns Choice
3/18/91–2/5/99

Roger Romesburg
Game Lands Main. Worker 2
Southwest Region
Rockwood
5/21/70–4/16/99



Ronald W. Kurtz
Sr. Civil Engineer Sup.
Bur. Land Management
Harrisburg Headquarters
New Cumberland
7/15/71–3/19/99





Eugene L. Johnson
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Northcentral Region
Philipsburg
10/10/67–6/25/99



Devon Henne
Survey Technician
Bur. of Land Mgmt.
Bernville
8/15/81–1/8/99

William G. Slusser
Forest Asst. Mgr.
Northwest Region
Oil City
7/6/68–6/25/99





Joseph Snyder
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Northwest Region
Corsica
12/5/67–6/25/99

Jean Lake
Clerk Typist 2
Northwest Region
Franklin
8/31/92–5/28/99





Rendle A. Ranck
Game Farm Asst. Sup.
Loyalsock Game Farm
Montoursville
5/23/69–6/25/99

James B. Rusnak
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Northcentral Region
Emporium
5/12/69–1/22/99





John "Jack" Weaver
I&E Supervisor
Northeast Region
Shavertown
3/25/68–6/25/99

Dorwin Taylor
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Northcentral Region
Shinglehouse
9/8/70–4/30/99



ALSO RETIRING were Richard Belding, Game Lands Management Group Supervisor, Southwest Region, Waynesburg, 3/29/65–1/8/99; Dennis Bernhardy, Game Conservation Officer Supervisor, Northcentral Region, Waterville, 3/25/68–12/25/98; Genevieve Brungard, Clerk Typist 3, Northcentral Region Office, Avis, 7/16/59–7/23/99; Frank B. Clark, Game Conservation Officer, Southcentral Region, Fayetteville, 3/25/72–4/30/99; Jimmie L. Dowie, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Northcentral Region, Kersey, 3/24/69–6/25/99; Patricia R. Dreier, Administrative Assistant, Bureau of Land Management, Harrisburg Headquarters, Lewisberry, 11/12/68–6/25/99; Louis C. Fortman, Game Conservation Officer, Southeast Region, New Freedom, 6/6/81–2/19/99; Elizabeth J. Funk, Clerk Typist 3, Bureau of Land Management, Harrisburg Headquarters, Harrisburg, 7/9/88–6/25/99; James E. Johnson, Game Lands Maintenance Worker 2, Southcentral Region, Petersburg, 1/13/70–6/30/99; Roger Lehman, Game Lands Officer Manager 2, Bureau of Land Management, Harrisburg Headquarters, Harrisburg,7/15/69–6/25/99; Donald C. Madl, Executive Director, Harrisburg Headquarters, Ligonier, 3/25/62–4/30/99; Dennis Ober, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Southeast Region, Ephrata, 6/8/70–4/2/99; Donald L. Reed, Game Lands Maintenance Worker 2, Southeast Region, Dillsburg, 4/22/69–6/25/99; Henry G. Stankewich, Regional Director, Northcentral Region, Montoursville, 3/29/65–10/29/99; William K. Shope, Wildlife Biologist 3, Bureau of Wildlife Management, Harrisburg Headquarters, Millerstown, 8/15/70–6/25/99; Kenneth M. Zinn, Land Management Supervisor, Northcentral Region Office, Jersey Shore, 3/28/70–4/2/99.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Patience

I'M GOING to steal a story I heard today, because it illustrates my point so well.

A friend called with happy news. He was out archery hunting and got extremely cold. He admitted that he didn't have enough warm clothes with him and by 4 o'clock was already chilled, standing in his treestand, over a buck scrape. Maybe I'll just give it up, he thought. I haven't seen anything anyhow. Then, he said, he made a "gut reassessment." Checking his watch, he saw he had about 45 minutes before quitting time. How chilly am I, and can I wait out the last half-hour or so? he thought. He was hunting over a hot scrape, and he decided he wasn't that impatient or that uncomfortable, so he gripped his bow again, pulled his collar up around his neck and waited.

"About 15 minutes later, I heard this *shush, shush* in the leaves, a deer walking," he said. The 6-point stopped at 30 yards, quartering away. My friend is a top-notch bow shot, and the arrow connected perfectly. The buck ran about 25 yards before piling up.

"Am I glad I waited," said my buddy, "It would have been just as easy to go the other way and give it up for the day."

Of all the hunter's arts, perhaps the hardest to learn and to sustain is the art of patience. Hunting, of any kind, is mostly a waiting game — even when it's done most actively. The bird hunter with a dog, who might put on miles during a day, has down time between grouse flushes, when the dog is casting about in tangles and thickets and the scent isn't there. "Wait, wait," is the whisper he hears from his sensible side, "Be patient and you'll kick up another bird. All you need is more time."

If patience is needed in the most energetic of hunting sports, where a hunter goes out to find the game, rather than waiting for the game to find him, what about the other types? In most styles of hunting, patience is the hunter's most effective tool for success.

Take the typical deer hunter, whether he uses a bow or firearm. His sport is mainly passive, which practically by definition means waiting. Yes, deer can be gotten by aggressive hunting tactics: driving, still-hunting and calling. But even these have their waiting periods, waiting for the drive to come through, waiting to take that next step and reveal more landscape, waiting for a buck to come to all that antler rattling and grunt tube blowing.

I'd wager that most deer are shot like my friend's, by just sticking it out, staying still, watching and waiting. And waiting and waiting. Much hunting consists of a lot of nothing happening (as far as game-getting) for a long period, and then everything occurring at once. Yet in remembrance, those hours of no deer appearing are compressed into "I waited on stand all morning," followed by the exciting words, "and then."

The actual moments — scant seconds usually — when the deer appears, the decision is made to shoot, the animal's shape appears behind the sight and the arrow is loosed or trigger is squeezed, and the climax becomes denouement, expand in memory and story. Where and how the deer first appeared, what it looked like, what it did, where it went and how it moved, what

the hunter did, how he felt and thought, what he saw and decided, what actions he took — retelling these memories can go on for hours (and often does).

Before every shot there was patience, for hours, days, weeks, months, maybe years. Every season we hear about someone who "shot his first buck in 30 years of hunting." I don't know that I'd have that much patience; I'd change my hunting spot, get more education about hunting, maybe new glasses. For the rest of us, no such extreme patience is needed before success happens.

Even so, patience tries our patience. In 1999, with luck, I will have taken my 50th whitetail since I began hunting in 1970, including seasons in several states and bag limits expanded by bow and antlerless opportunities. After so many years, I know that time is all that's needed to get me to my next deer, or at least my next good opportunity to shoot one (if I don't get the shot or miss, at least I had a chance). I should have confidence by now that if I just wait, I'll get shooting. Yet every year relearning the art of patience seems harder.

Bob Steiner



Maybe it's that we all seem to be so hurried and harried nowadays, taking on too much to do, having too many conflicting pulls on our time. Yet the very slowed down, time-stretching nature of hunting is what we say we like about it. It's just that getting ourselves back in tune with the plodding pace of the outdoors, back to the rhythm of the trees, is difficult. Sometimes I feel like I steal an hour or two away from work, hurry to get into the woods, and practically find myself saying, "Okay, deer, where are you, get a move on, I don't have all day, let's get it done."

My fidgeting about, checking my watch every five minutes, is enough to drive away deer, and probably has. When that happens, the snort behind me jars me out of my impatience and let's me know that if I had waited calmly, I wouldn't have spooked the deer away. Then I readjust. I grin, kick myself mentally, and settle down to the wait, the way I should have in the beginning. Time will put another deer there, I tell myself. I just had found out what I knew all along, that patience has power.

Waiting for game is much of the pleasure of hunting. It's a cliché, and not totally true, that you become "one" with the woods. But you do let yourself be absorbed by its time schedule, or rather lack of one. It's not time you need to mark out here, it's just sun shadows shifting. Waiting is not the grind you imagined it to be. You become "the watcher," as chickadees, nuthatches and titmice flit among the trees and move on. You are the silent, still "listener" as a hawk screams overhead, and squirrels whine in fright and annoyance. And in the end, maybe that day, maybe another, you hear the muted *shush, shush* of your buck on its way.

Patience may become a lost art, though,

BEFORE EVERY SHOT there was patience, for hours, days, weeks, months, maybe years. Every season we hear about someone who "shot his first buck in 30 years of hunting."

even among hunters. How can they stand for hours just to see a yearling doe, when advertisements, magazines, outdoor TV shows are telling them they've got to hurry and get that trophy buck? The focus has become too much on the result, not enough on the joys of the process, which is the heart of hunting. It's no wonder, to those hunters who are goal-oriented, that results may come harder and what it takes to get them not enjoyable. Impatience steals hunting's purpose. The wait should be accepted as a necessary, even satisfying, part of the game.

I thought about today's lack of patience when I talked to an acquaintance who had been caribou hunting on an island in the Far North. "They dropped us off and for a week I didn't have a phone, TV, or my laptop computer," he said. I almost said, "Bet you were happy for that," but the impatient hunter cut me off. "It was terrible. I paced up and down camp. I thought I was going to go nuts. I couldn't wait to get back."

Seems like he missed the whole point of the trip, which wasn't a caribou head for the wall. I felt sorry for him, because he didn't know what a vacation was for, didn't have the patience to let his pace slow down to match the pace of the outdoors he had journeyed so far to visit.

Every time we go hunting, whether it's thousands of miles away on an adventure, or just stepping out of the backyard into the oak woods for a squirrel hunt, we get a mini-vacation from hurry, a period of patience. It might take a few minutes for our steps to slacken, as we feel again the slower motion of the forest and adjust. We breathe a long sigh, loosen our shoulders and settle in for the wait that is woods time. □

Cover Painting by Dennis Karchner

ON THE TRESHOLD of a new millennium, this month's cover acknowledges the remarkable comeback of just some of our wildlife species during the last century. In the late 1800s many species were dwindling due to deforestation, pollution and unregulated hunting and trapping. From this dark period emerged the Game Commission in 1895, created to protect and conserve wildlife. The wildlife diversity we enjoy today is largely due to the strong support from many Pennsylvanians and conservation organizations that has been given over the years.

- **Bald Eagle** — The bald eagle comeback in Pennsylvania is nothing short of amazing, and is due to improving environmental conditions since the banning of DDT (a pesticide that nearly wiped out eagles in the 1950s and '60s), and a reintroduction program. There were 41 nesting bald eagle pairs in the state last year.
- **White-tailed Deer** — The white-tailed deer had become scarce by the end of the 19th century, and the Game Commission began a stocking program in 1906 to bolster the state's herd. Today, there are too many deer in many areas, and hunting for our most popular game animal has never been better.
- **Wild Turkey** — By the early 1900s, because of market hunting and the clearing of huge forested tracts, wild turkey populations were in trouble. Today, the wild turkey is thriving throughout the state.
- **Black Bear** — Black bears never disappeared in Pennsylvania, but they became scarce in many sections. The Game Commission began a trap-and-transfer program in 1921, which was a big success. Today thanks to extensive research projects and management initiatives, bears continue to expand their range, and the population is around 10,000 animals.
- **Beaver** — By the end of the 19th century, uncontrolled trapping to supply a huge appetite for pelts in Europe had reduced the population of our largest rodent, the beaver, but today this furbearer is back in good numbers, thanks to well regulated trapping seasons and the clean-up of our waterways.

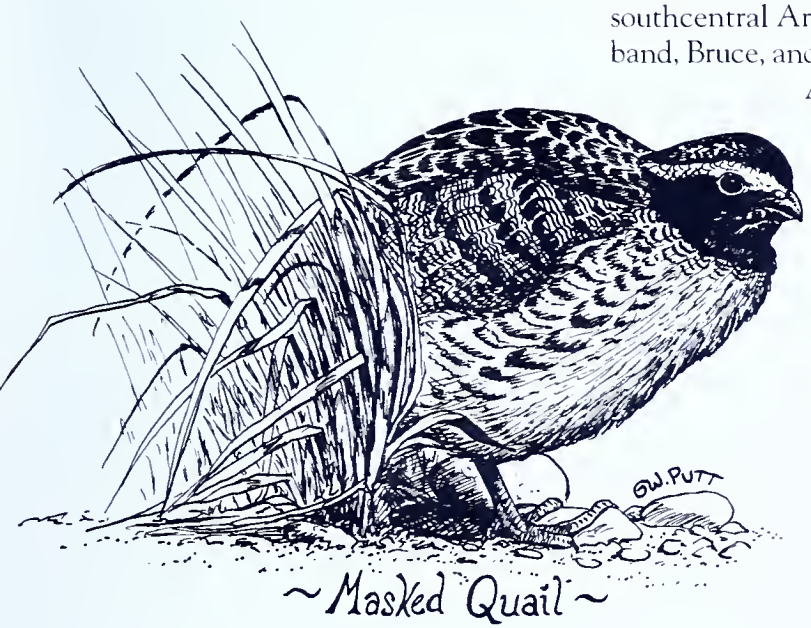
With sound management the masked bobwhite's future should be brighter than that of the passenger pigeon.

Arizona's Passenger Pigeon

HABITAT LOSS is affecting wildlife populations worldwide. Although the loss of forests has received the most attention, the loss of native grasslands is even more devastating. Scientists estimate that 99 percent of our native prairie is gone.

Here in Pennsylvania, grassland bird populations have declined significantly in the southeast and southcentral parts of the state during the past 30 years because of development and changing farm practices. According to Game Commission biologist Scott Klinger, ring-necked pheasants, eastern meadowlarks and vesper sparrows have declined by 80 percent, grasshopper sparrows by 83 percent, field sparrows by 67 percent, and northern bobwhites by a whopping 94 percent.

The northern bobwhite statistic was of particular interest to me after a visit to southcentral Arizona last winter. My husband, Bruce, and I had come to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge on a cool, clear day in search of the masked bobwhite, also known as "Arizona's passenger pigeon," according to our host, Michael Goddard, the assistant director of the refuge.



The masked bobwhite was thought to be extinct when Arthur Cleveland Bent published his

Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds in 1932. "This bobwhite has now disappeared entirely from Arizona and is nearly, or quite, extinct in Sonora," Bent concluded.

How had a bird first collected by the scientific community a mere 48 years previously vanished so quickly? Herbert Brown, a knowledgeable amateur ornithologist from West Virginia, and an early expert on the bird, blamed it on too many cattle and too little rain.

Early historians reported that the Altar Valley in southcentral Arizona, which supported most of Arizona's masked bobwhites, was covered with native perennial grasses when European settlers entered the area. This fragile subtropical grassland provided essential food and cover for masked bobwhites, but with the introduction of cattle, the grasslands were quickly overgrazed.



In a little more than 20 years, the number of cattle on Arizona range land went from 5,000 to one and a half million, most of which was in southern Arizona. The following two years (1892-93), a devastating drought killed tens of thousands of cattle, but not before they totally denuded the landscape.

Cattle ranching in Sonora, Mexico, didn't expand quite as rapidly as in Arizona, and so it was not until the mid-1930s that the Mexican range was similarly overgrazed. By then the masked bobwhite, a quintessential habitat specialist, seemed to be gone forever.

At the time of its supposed demise, the masked bobwhite was still a separate species, although ornithologists continued to debate the issue well into the 20th century. As far as they could determine, both northern bobwhites *Colinus virginianus*, of the eastern and midwestern United States, and masked bobwhites *Colinus ridgwayi* had identical calls, and a female masked bobwhite looked exactly like a female northern bobwhite. The only difference seemed to be the appearance of the male masked bobwhite, which sported a rich, dark chestnut breast and a black throat and head, instead of the mottled breast, white throat and prominent white eye stripe of the northern bobwhite.

Finally, in 1944, long after its extirpation in Arizona and supposed extinction in Sonora, the American Ornithologist's Union declared it the subspecies *Colinus virginianus ridgwayi*, and so it has remained.

One ornithologist, J.W. Ligon, insisted that the masked bobwhite was still fairly numerous in central and southern Sonora as late as 1937, but when he returned to the area in 1950 he could find no trace of the bird. Ranchmen who had known of the presence of the birds said they seemed to have vanished overnight, he wrote. During the next 14 years not one masked bobwhite was documented in Mexico or Arizona.

Then, in 1964, Steve Gallizioli, an Arizona Game and Fish biologist, and naturalists Jim and Seymour Levy of Tucson, rediscovered a small population in Sonora. Having been granted a reprieve that passenger pigeon advocates never received here in the East, masked bobwhite enthusiasts were determined to reintroduce the bird to its previous haunts in Arizona.

Ligon had first tried this with Sonoran birds in the late 1930s, but they had been released into the wrong habitat and quickly disappeared. A '60s attempt also failed. Vandals broke into the breeding pens and killed many captive birds. Furthermore, the nagging habitat problem continued to sabotage reintroduction efforts, because there was no ungrazed native grassland left

within the former Arizona range of the masked bobwhite.

Nevertheless, with the passage of the Endangered Species Act, the masked bobwhite was listed, and the USFWS began its long battle to reintroduce the masked bobwhite to Arizona. In fact, according to Goddard, the masked bobwhite came to symbolize endangered species in Arizona.

During the '70s, the USFWS had only altered habitat to work with — the privately owned, Buenos Aires Ranch near Sasabe on the Arizona/Mexican border, where cattle still grazed. First they captured wild birds from Sonora as breeding stock to create populations of captive-reared birds. Then, the captive-reared birds were provided with wild-caught, sterilized, male northern bobwhites from Texas as foster parents to teach them how to adapt to the dangers in the wild. In 1977 researchers confirmed some natural reproduction, and two years later located 74 calling males on the ranch.

Then, once again, disaster struck by way of a 2-year drought and excessive overgrazing. By 1983 only a few male masked bobwhites survived. But the Victoria Land and Cattle Company, which had bought the ranch in the '70s, was put out of business by the recession in the early '80s. When the ranch came up for bid, the USFWS bought it for the sole purpose of restoring the masked bobwhite to Arizona.

Almost immediately, the 117,000-acre refuge was closed to livestock, a move that made the refuge and its employees extremely unpopular with neighboring ranchers. Then began the long, and still unfinished, task of restoring a native grassland to benefit not only the masked bobwhite, but other grassland dependent birds, such as Baird's and Cassin's sparrows, horned larks and western meadowlarks, as well as mammals that had been squeezed out by cattle ranching practices.

Pronghorn, mule deer and white-tailed deer were reintroduced to the refuge, and recently another endangered species — the ferruginous pygmy owl — has been discovered there.

We're making it up as we go along, Goddard freely admits, because we are dealing with a lot of unknowns regarding the masked bobwhite's life history. What is known is that masked bobwhites remain in coveys where pair bonds are formed until late June or early July. The calling of the males from elevated perches heralds the start of the breeding season, between June 25 and July 15. The summer rains in mid-July trigger actual breeding, and nesting is dependent on abundant ground cover that conceals both the nest and the young from predators. The rains also produce a flush of invertebrate prey and plant food for the parents and their five to 15 chicks. Hatching starts in late July, peaks in September, and tapers off by late October. Throughout late fall, winter and spring, the masked bobwhites form coveys consisting of family groups that are usually no larger than 20 birds.

In an effort to produce more birds each year, a captive breeding program speeds up the natural process by controlling the temperature and humidity in the quail breeding facility, so that captive masked bobwhites are ready to start breeding in mid-March and are producing eggs by early April.

Until 1996 the breeding was done at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, and the resultant young quail were shipped to Buenos Aires NWR every year. Since 1997 the refuge has had its own breeding facility and hatches them out at their quail barn. Once they hatch, surplus masked bobwhite adults act as foster parents. In an ordered sequence, the young move from brooders to small runs to outside release pens. In the brooders and small runs they receive food pellets and water, but when they are put in outside release pens, they are encouraged to eat insects and scratch feed and they get their water from dew.

They remain in the outside pens for at

least three months before their release in September, October and November. This way the birds are older and bigger than those that are naturally hatched in the wild. Predation is the primary problem, and chief biologist Sally Gall, who has been working with the quail for six years, believes that they are not predator smart and are quickly picked off by their major predators — northern harriers, red-tailed and Cooper's hawks, and great horned owls. On the other hand, she has found evidence that they are pairing up in the wild and have produced chicks.

There are more seen, and in larger groups of 10 to 25, during the covey season she says. Gall and her assistants walk one-mile by one-mile transects in search of masked bobwhites, but counting them is difficult. Instead of flushing, they hide in the grass and move only if they are in danger of being stepped on, so counting calling males is still the most reliable method. In the summer of 1998 they counted 57.

Keeping cattle off the refuge has not altered the habitat enough to encourage the return of masked bobwhites. Much of the refuge is still covered by Lehmann's lovegrass, an introduced species from South Africa that was used to hold soil in place and feed cattle back in the '50s and provides little food or cover for the masked bobwhites. They much prefer alkali-sacatone and side oats gramma, both native grasses. To encourage the return of native grasses and to revitalize the soil, fire management is used on the refuge, where 14,000 acres at a time on a 5-year rotation plan are burned. The verdict is not yet in on how this management technique will work out in the long run. Refuge caretakers have also been replanting native grasses in selected areas.

After spending hours talking about masked bobwhites and touring the breeding facilities, we did have a chance to see several dozen in a release pen. They were extraordinarily wary of us, piling up in a corner of the pen and hiding as best they could. Perhaps, in the long run, Arizona's "passenger pigeons" will be a success story.

The Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge is one of the best examples of an ecosystem approach to management in the National Wildlife Refuge system.

Whether or not a self-sustaining population of masked bobwhites is established, though, the refuge is one of the best examples of an ecosystem approach to management in the National Wildlife Refuge system. Its combination of grasslands, wetlands, cottonwood-lined streambeds, and sycamore and live oak mountain canyons is already home to five endangered species, 10 species of special concern, and a wide variety of other native plants and animals, including 314 species of birds. It's a beautiful piece of primeval Arizona that is wonderful to visit at any time of year, and is proof that saving habitat for one species benefits many more.

This lesson is one that we in Pennsylvania are also learning, as we reintroduce extirpated species such as fishers and elk. Without suitable habitat, wildlife cannot survive. We need to ask ourselves, as the Arizonans have, whether we are willing to make room for grassland species in our increasingly urbanized and heavily farmed state. If not, the northern bobwhite may be extirpated in Pennsylvania just as the masked bobwhite was in Arizona. □

Bowhunters have plenty of pitfalls to avoid. Here's what can be called . . .

Bowhunting's Seven Deadly Sins

MANY of the folks who lived back during the Dark Ages in Europe strongly believed in the power of prayer and salvation. They also believed in the consequences of sin and damnation. A part of that system of beliefs was the concept of the Seven Deadly Sins, essentially character flaws like avarice, gluttony and envy (to mention just three of the seven) which could result in an eternity of misery and damnation for the sinner.

Much of this is documented in classic literature, such as the story of Faust or Dante's Divine Comedy. Of course, there was also a strong belief in the concept of the Seven Cardinal Virtues, but that's material for another column. The convention of the Seven Deadly Sins still endures in various forms in contemporary society today. Without looking too hard, we might find that similarly deadly sins manifest themselves today in many secular pursuits. Unfortunately, bowhunting is no exception.

With modern technology such as mechanical releases, compound bows and carbon arrows, bowhunters here in Pennsylvania and throughout the country are enjoying a bowhunting renaissance. But when it comes to sinning, we're all still haunted by the Dark Ages. Bowhunting, by its very nature, provides plenty of opportunities for us to commit a plethora of sins and errors in our pursuit of game. Here are just seven of the most deadly of those transgressions:

Sin # 1: Overlooking "Invisible" Obstacles

No matter how clear any bowshot appears to be, chances are it really isn't, especially if it's beyond 20 yards. This is because of invisible objects, more specifically, invisible branches — branches so small and obscured by patterns of shadow and light that they become virtually invisible, particularly during the prime hunting hours in late afternoon and early morning. The result of an altercation with one of these invisible obstacles: a deflected arrow, a missed shot, and a lost deer. Bowhunters who rely on peep sights are particularly susceptible to this.

Forgive me, but I have committed this sin too many times over the years, and the most recent example was this past season. I was settled in my treestand one afternoon in late October, hunting a new piece of unfamiliar property. All I knew about it was that the property owner had been seeing "plenty of deer" right in her backyard. I selected a suitable tree and ascended with my treestand. I had hunted this same spot two days before and, beyond a considerable contingency of foraging gray squirrels, I hadn't seen a thing. For me, the principle attraction of this property was its proximity to the school where I teach, but the

convenience factor would soon be negated by lack of game if I didn't see some deer soon. After another unproductive hour on stand, I decided to play a medley of tunes on my grunt call.

A heavy-footed shuffling of leaves from the underbrush below heralded the appearance of the biggest-racked white-tailed buck I have ever seen while hunting in Pennsylvania. My arrow was nocked, my heart was pounding, my bow was drawn and my sights were glued to the buck's vitals as he ambled toward my stand. I forced my eyes away from the distraction of his considerable headgear and, as the gnarly-racked monster passed broadside 20 yards away in the dappled shadow and sunlight of late afternoon, I released the perfect shot.

Or at least it should have been. But instead of the solid *thwack* of arrow into flesh, the shot was followed by a mysterious *boinging* sound of vibrating wood. As the buck bounded casually back into the brush he kicked a downed tree limb and left it waving in his wake. This, I conjectured, was the source of the strange sound. But when I descended and inspected the place where the buck had stood, I found only my bloodless arrow buried in the ground. After a summer and fall of relentless practice, how could I have missed such an ideal chance? My eyes followed the tree back up to where my stand had stood. I traced the mental trajectory of my arrow from point of release to point of impact with the ground. I remained baffled until the third or fourth mental tracing when I finally saw it — a broken, weathered branch of a dead pine tree. At the tip of the stubby gray branch, was the white flesh of newly exposed wood where it had been split nearly in two.

Tricks of shadow and light, coupled with my unwavering concentration on the buck's vitals, had caused me to overlook what, until the aftermath of my mistake, was essentially an invisible obstacle. If I had waited for the buck to take just one more step, or if my stand had been just two inches higher or lower, I would have been hanging Mr. Big on my wall. When I finally pieced together what had happened, realizing I had just missed the buck of a lifetime, I was sick. Yes, I had sinned, and the consequences were, for lack of a better word, damnable.

Sin # 2: Overlooking Visible Obstacles

Of course the antithesis of the invisible branch is the large and very visible tree. Sometimes the only shot a bowhunter gets is through a narrow opening between the trunks of very mature trees. Generally there are two outcomes to this kind of chance: a clean kill or a complete miss and, as any self-respecting bowhunter knows, the next best thing to a fatal shot is a clean miss. Incidentally, one of the most sinful things any bowhunter can do is not to follow up each and every shot on deer. You must be compelled to trail the animal until it is re-



TREESTANDS represent a plethora of bowhunting sins that could very well be deadly. In this case the major infraction is climbing with bow in hand and without a safety belt or, better yet, a harness.

covered or until you are absolutely certain that the arrow missed or the animal was not mortally wounded. If you're not willing to do this, you shouldn't be out in the woods in the first place.

A between-the-trunks shot presented itself to me a few seasons ago. The result? Allow me to report that mature beech trees are extremely tenacious of life and seldom, if ever, succumb to a direct hit by a Satellite broadhead.

In any event, when hunting game, taking any shot you know isn't clear or which is beyond your pre-determined effective range is always sinfully bad judgement.

Sin # 3: Impatience

All bowhunters learn early on that patience, in huge doses, is a prerequisite to success; it goes with the territory. The irony here is that all the patience you can muster while waiting on stand is sometimes just a fraction shy of enough. This is especially frustrating when you've been on stand for three hours and then decide to call it quits 10 seconds too soon.

I distinctly remember one season when I spent every evening in a treestand overlooking a promising crossing. Buck rubs were concentrated in that quarter-acre as thick as the dandelions in your neighbor's front lawn. I was certain a buck just had to pass under my stand if I just waited him out long enough. So, for three weeks I stayed riveted to the side of that tree until the last legal shooting light. When the last day of the season rolled around, I still hadn't spotted the buck but, with fresh rubs appearing every day, I knew he was still around.

Understandably, all those unproductive evenings had taken the edge off my anticipation. I was getting antsy, already mentally planning my strategy for the firearm season, when I decided to knock off 10 minutes early. I climbed to the ground and had taken maybe three steps when from fewer than 20 yards away, just on the far side of some heavy cover, I heard the dreaded sound every hunter recognizes. It was the wheezing snort of an alarmed deer immediately followed by the rapidly receding sounds of crashing brush. The fleeting flash of a bounding antler confirmed the buck's identity. Another few minutes on stand might have made all the difference, but by that point my patience was totally bankrupt.

Sin # 4: Too Much Patience

It is also ironic that the bowhunter's cardinal rule of virtue may sometimes turn on him. Yes, it is possible to be foiled by having too much patience. For example, a hunter may waste an entire season patiently hunting a poor area. He might sit tight when a quiet stalk on a sighted deer could possibly bring him within bow range. More commonly, he might pass up a decent shot with expectations of a better one and end up with no shot at all.

One crisp, clear October evening I was on stand in a nice old locust tree above a well traveled trail. It was located in the precise center of a tiny woodland patch surrounded by open, grassy fields splashed with ribbons of ripening corn. A 6-point buck made his casual way along the edge of the woods, presenting one or two fairly decent 25 to 30-yard shots as he nipped lazily at maple leaves. I was so certain that deer would turn down the trail over which I was perched that I held my fire. Instead, he headed right out into the open field and into the standing corn. I never saw him again.

Sin # 5: The Unguarded Moment

It goes without saying that every hunter has been caught (sometimes literally) with his pants down. The rule here, very obviously, and as every Boy Scout knows, is to be prepared at all times. This includes traveling to and from your stand, something I also learned the hard way.

A friend of mine, Mike Bazzano, and I were hunting a local farm one evening. We had taken separate stands and agreed to meet back at his truck around closing time. I had already gone a week without sighting a deer and this day was more of the

same. I left the woods early, shrouded in a discouraged, negative attitude. I un-nocked my arrow and returned it to my bow quiver as I walked back to the truck. I was about halfway there when I heard a rustling from the stand of corn to my left. Two seconds later a dandy 8-point buck burst out into the grass field not 10 yards away and directly broadside in front of me. He stopped there and looked back over his shoulder to the spot where Mike had spooked him. I stared gape-mouthed for long moments before I finally recovered the presence of mind to grope for an arrow. At about the same time, the buck realized I was standing there, and he just about fell over from the shock. He bolted across the open field before settling into a steady trot, his white flag dancing defiantly toward the setting sun. I had sinned again. While it's unwise to walk with an arrow nocked, it's also dumb to let your guard down on the way to and from your stand.

Sin # 6: Equipment Failure

Aside from expertise and experience, equipment is the most important aspect of bowhunting, and a bowhunter's familiarity with that equipment is critical. Equipment that is new, faulty or borrowed can often spell the difference between success and failure.

Once, during my early, formative years in bowhunting, I lost my shooting glove shortly before leaving on a weekend hunting foray. As a last resort, I borrowed a friend's glove but never had a chance to practice with it. So, as my sinfully bad luck would have it, a nice 7-point buck showed up about five yards from the base of my tree. This unfamiliar piece of borrowed equipment turned a ridiculously easy shot into an unmitigated disaster. I drew back, aimed deliberately at what was as close to a point blank shot as you'll ever get, and released what should have been an iron-clad guarantee of venison in the freezer. To my horror, somehow the oversized glove got hung-up on the bowstring as I released. The arrow sailed over the deer's back and transformed a certain kill into a vanishing white flag. I learned an age-old lesson: Be familiar and practice with all of your equipment.



WHILE some bowhunters might protest that it's a sin to shoot a small buck, it just isn't so. Any deer taken with a bow qualifies as a trophy.

Sin # 7: Misusing Treestands

As you might suspect, we've saved the most deadly of our seven sins for last. Treestands represent a general category that, in and of itself, includes a quiver full of potential dangers, not the least of which might cost you your life. No one can argue that treestands don't give the bowhunter a tremendous advantage when used properly. As we all know, this is because they place the hunter above the deer's line of sight and help disperse human scent.

One inherent problem with permanent wooden treestands is their tendency to weaken and loosen over the years — particularly when the structure spans more than one tree. This soon results in squeaking, creaking and life-threatening structural failure. These stands are also not legal on our state game lands. Portable stands, where legal, are much better, although many of these tend to creak at the very moment you shift your weight to draw your bow. Portable climbing stands are popular, and most of the modern ones are fairly safe if conditions are right. But if you

plan to ascend a smooth-barked tree on a rainy day, forget it. I made that mistake many years ago, and I think that old tulip poplar still bears the long, narrow scars of my downward-scraping fingernails.

I know from experience that an alerted deer will look up. Another problem is relative height. You might be up to 20 feet above the ground, but eye level with or below a deer coming over the ridge. Hilly terrain can neutralize the advantage you thought you were gaining from your elevated platform, and a deer uphill from you may easily spot your slightest movement.

The cardinal rule of treestand hunting is always safety first. Always strap yourself in — preferably with a harness. One nasty fall could prove fatal. I once fell from a height of 10 feet when the top rung of a rickety old ladder I was using snapped. I was lucky; I landed in soft swamp mud and was not seriously injured. But I know of at least one unfortunate bowhunter who dozed off in a tree and woke up on the ground, permanently paralyzed from the neck down. So take that critical extra second to strap yourself in. If you forget your strap or harness, hunt on the ground.

It may be, as the Puritans once argued, that it is the nature of mankind to be sinful. Nonetheless, bowhunters should always strive to be sin-free. Of course, there are far more deadly bowhunting sins than the ones listed here. I'm sure all of us have more than a few "original sins" tucked away in the darker recesses of our bowhunting pasts. But for now, all you can do is try to avoid sinning anew in the coming seasons. If you fail to do that, and you lose that buck of your dreams as a result, you could spend the rest of the season repenting. But on the other hand, if you can avoid the pitfalls of these sins and others, your reward may be the blessing of bowhunting success. □

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Hunters, shooters and firearm manufacturers face perplexing problems at the start of the new millennium. Things were much different when the 20th Century made its debut.

100 Years of Shooting

IT'S A rather faint picture, but I remember seeing my brother, Dan, shooting at a rabbit in our orchard. I think it was around 1927, which would make me six years old. I can't recall if he made the shot, but I can still vividly see the large puff of white smoke from Dan's black powder shell.

Modern hunters may think the black powder shell died instantly when smokeless powder hit the scene, but that's not the case. Winchester still offered black powder shells in the early 1930s. The 1933 Folsom Sporting Goods Catalogue features Nublack black powder shells for 85 cents a box.

Smokeless powder field loads were listed for $1.25 a box, and high brass shells pushed the price tag to around $1.50 per box. Because money was not too plentiful back then, I imagine Dan stuck with black powder as long as possible.

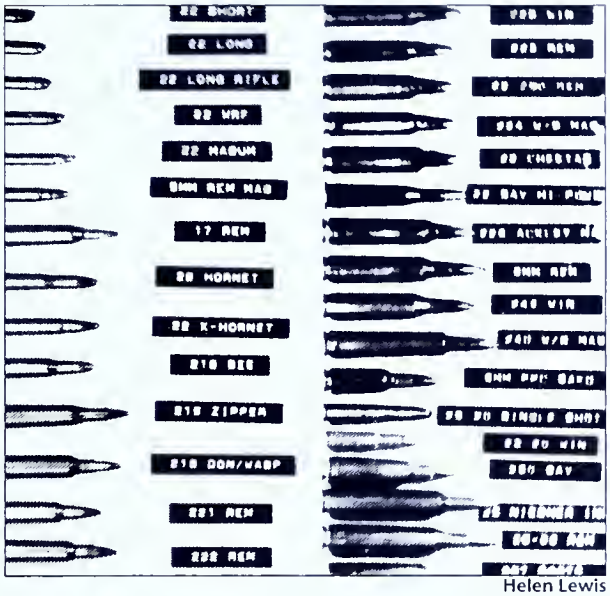
Hunters, shooters and firearm manufacturers are facing perplexing problems in the new millennium. Things were much different when the 20th century made its debut. In 1903, A. J. Rummel Arms Company's 193-page catalog allocated 162 pages to hunting, trapping, reloading and shooting gear. That might not sound unusual, but there were dozens of companies, manufacturers and wholesalers engaged in the same business. It was possible back then to order firearms, parts, ammunition and a maze of shooting related gear by mail or railway express.

We tend to think that handloading is relatively new. In a sense, handloading began with the first musket (arquebus). It's worth noting that as early as 1339, the ribauldequin (not a shoulder weapon) was in use. It was a series of small barrels fastened together in a straight line. Each barrel had a touchhole, and a single pass of a burning wick (flame of any type) would set them off almost simultaneously. The ribauld might be called the predecessor of today's machine gun.

I won't get involved with the progression of gun making, but over the centuries firearms evolved from a crude barrel fastened to a "tiller" that was stuck in the ground to absorb the recoil to the modern firearm that is the epitome of accuracy and dependability. With the tiller stock, accurate aiming was impossible, and the tiller

eventually evolved into a shoulder-type stock. The gun was now recognized by the military and would change the course of history over the next 500 years.

From the beginning, ignition was a major problem. After the shoulder stock and sights were added, hunters and shooters were never sure if the gun would fire. The touchhole on top allowed the shooter or a helper to ignite the priming charge with a burning coal or wick. This probably guaranteed ignition, but it's doubtful if the shooter and his helper were completely coordinated. In other words, the chances of the shooter being on target when the charge was ignited would have been small.



Helen Lewis

THE EVOLUTION of the self-contained metallic cartridge began with the .22 Short. The Short was really the first varmint round, but through the years many long-range varmint cartridges have been developed. Just since this photo was taken several new cartridges (6mmBR Rem., .19-223 Calhoon and .19 Calhoon) have become available.

The flint and frizzen rifle (flintlock) held the spotlight for several hundred years. No one knows precisely when the flintlock became the main system for ignition, but it evolved from the wheel lock. Both systems used a stone to create sparks. It is known that by the mid-1500s, snapping locks were in use.

The ignition story travels a long and twisting road. It's also filled with many false claims. We do know that around 1802, a Scottish clergyman, Alexander Forsyth, used loose fulminates for priming. Around the same time, an English artist, Joshua Shaw, came up with the idea of a cap type primer that fit over a nipple. In 1815, Shaw switched to copper for his caps, which is still used today. The self-contained percussion cap led the way to the modern metallic cartridge.

The self-contained cartridge evolved from a cartridge made of paper or linen that appeared in the mid-1500s. It was really just a powder charge wrapped in paper or linen to facilitate carrying and loading. Later a lead ball was incorporated into the unit. It took but a few seconds to rip open the paper or linen container and dump the powder charge and ball down the barrel. There were many versions of this, such as the Dreyse "needle gun," which at first was a muzzleloader and changed to a breechloader around 1837.

The bullet in Dreyse's design had a primer in its hollow base, which was detonated by a long slender firing pin that passed through the powder charge. Because the firing pin looked much like a needle, the nickname "needle gun" became popular.

The details of how the self-contained metallic cartridge evolved are simply too long and complex for this article, but around 1854, Smith & Wesson developed the .22 Short, which is still in existence and can boast that it's the oldest metallic American cartridge. It was a rimfire, but long before 1900, the self-contained metallic centerfire cartridge was in use. External ballistics was still not a household topic, and big bores still reigned supreme. The potential higher velocity of the self-contained metallic cartridge was about to change the shooting and hunting clan's

long-held belief that big bores meant more power. While a 54-caliber bore still exists, caliber diameters below .45 have been in the spotlight for more than 100 years. Over the decades, metallic cartridge makers have put the emphasis on bullet design instead of bullet diameter.

Handloaders today can purchase factory bullets that are nearly equal to bullets offered by custom shops. That's not an exaggeration; I've shot many 1-hole, 5-shot groups at 100 yards with both factory ammo and match bullets offered by Speer, Hornady, Sierra and Nosler. I'm not implying that yesteryear's factory bullets were totally inaccurate, but they couldn't match the performance of bullets from custom shops.

To be certain of using a concentric, balanced bullet, benchrest competitors either made their own (using expensive handmade bullet dies) or purchased large lots from benchrest bullet makers. Custom bullet makers, such as Walt Berger and others, are offering both hunting and competitive bullets that are state of the art in design. Five-shot 100-yard groups measuring below two hundred thousandths of an inch are not uncommon with today's benchrest shooters.

Shooting may have remained mostly something only hunters did if the home reloading press had not hit the scene around 1947. I'm not implying that handloading was unheard of until then, but before 1950 the vast majority of hunters and centerfire competitive shooters used factory ammunition. There was a fairly strong following of shotgun reloaders during the black powder era when brass shotgun shells were in vogue.

During the waning years of the 1940s and early 1950s, home reloading was struggling to gain acceptance. The average hunter was suspicious of both the reloaded shotshell and big game cartridge. There were good reasons for this suspicion, as some of the shells being turned out were far from dependable. At that time, handloading data was scarce. The handloader had no reliable information to show him how to turn out dependable, safe, reloaded ammunition. The handloader was more or less on an uncharted course. Most reloading information was home concocted and came from other handloaders. I still have a sheet of tablet paper with a top load put together by a friend for his .30-06. I won't even mention the amount of 4895 powder he used, but it had to be firmly compressed to get the bullet even partly seated. By the mid-1950s, varmint hunting was growing by leaps and bounds.

Varmint hunting in the East had always been a residual sport — something to hunt when game animals were not in season. The advent of Remington's .222 coupled with home reloading suddenly changed the picture. Thousands of returning service men and women swelled the hunting ranks, and rolling your own ammo became a way of life. With the inherent accuracy of the .222 cartridge, along with inexpensive reloaded ammunition, varmint shooting was being welcomed with open arms.

The handloaded round created another shooting sport that was previously unheard of in the hunting ranks. It also grew like a mushroom. Shooting 5-shot, 100-yard groups became the accepted method for testing reloaded cartridges. With inexpensive high quality ammo available, sighting in a rifle changed from firing a shot or two at a two-gallon oil can to a series of range tests that could easily consume three or four boxes of ammo.

Although benchrest competition was active long before home reloading, the quest for accuracy was the paramount reason for many handloaders to get involved in benchrest competition. The benchrest clan was accuracy oriented (Precision Shooting Magazine editor Dave Brennan calls benchrest accuracy "critical accuracy") and was leaving no stone unturned to improve both rifles and ammunition. When their efforts paid off on the competitive range, rifle builders began to take

a second look at what it takes to build an accurate rifle. Remington probably led the pack with a high quality barreled action and superb trigger.

Today's factory heavy barrel varmint rifle incorporates many accuracy innovations directly related to benchrest shooting — close tolerances in both chamber and barrel, adjustable triggers and the switch to stainless steel barrels. Admittedly, many will argue the stainless steel move. The same holds true with reloading equipment manufacturers. RCBS, Dillon, Hornady, Lee, Mec, Forster/Bonanza and others are producing reloading equipment that will produce both top quality shotshells and metallic cartridges that meet the needs of the most demanding hunter and competitor.

It's fair to say that handmade reloading gear offers the utmost in accuracy. Equipment such as Neil Jones' custom die set (machined to the exact dimensions of your rifle's chamber), primer pocket modifier, and a super accurate powder measure are a must for serious reloading. K & M's primer seater that incorporates a dial indicator guarantees every primer will be seated the same. Using a Bald Eagle set of rests surely beats two sandbags. Custom gear is widely available.

Over the past 100 years, shooters have enjoyed a great many improvements, from controlled powder burning to precise tolerance in rifle actions and barrels. The 1/4-inch, 5-shot, 100-yard group was just a dream in the late 1940s; today it's commonplace and doesn't even get honorable mention in some classes of benchrest shooting. As we enter the new millennium, we can look back at the accomplishments of the past and look forward with a renewed determination to make the next 100 years of shooting even better. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

To Tell the Tooth

Place the letter next to the total number of teeth on the right with the mammal on the left, then see what they spell.

_____	Gray Squirrel	N	16
_____	Star-nosed Mole	I	28
_____	Opossum	C	22
_____	Little Brown Bat	H	44
_____	Eastern Cottontail	E	50
_____	Muskrat	G	32
_____	White-tailed Deer	W	38

answers on p. 64

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

From June 1, 1997 through May 31, 1998, 170 moose were reported killed on Vermont highways and another 46 were struck by vehicles but walked away.

Hunters took 20,068 deer in Vermont in 1998, including 4,659 during archery season and 10,547 in buck season.

Hunters in Minnesota took 142,000 deer during the 1998 firearms season — a 12 percent increase from 1997.

Hunters took 914 black bears in Virginia in 1998 — up 16 percent from the 788 taken in 1997. Warm weather during the season and plenty of mast accounted for the increase.

Pennsylvania produces more hardwood lumber than any other state in the nation, including the highest volume of select species such as cherry, red oak, white oak, sugar maple and yellow poplar.

There were 51 hunting incidents in Iowa in 1998, including three fatalities. Of the 51 incidents, 21 occurred while pheasant hunting and 10 while deer hunting. There were 37 hunting incidents in 1997, including three fatalities.

Nutritionally, venison ranks lower than beef, pork and poultry in total fat. Based on a 3-ounce cooked/roasted portion, venison contains 3.2 grams total fat, 1.3g saturated fat; lean pork, 9.6g total, 3.5g saturated; lean beef, 14.4g total, 5.6g saturated; chicken (skinless), 3.6g total, 1g saturated.

A state record was set in West Virginia in 1998 for bow-harvested deer in the typical category. Mark Lester of Gilbert, WV, took a 10-point buck in Logan County that scored 175 6/8.

Hunters in Texas experienced their second safest hunting season on record (dating back to 1966) in 1998. There were 40 hunting incidents with three fatalities. The record low of 31 incidents, including two fatalities, occurred in 1996.

Hunters in Wyoming had a 47 percent success rate on mule deer in 1998. Success rates for other big game were: pronghorn antelope, 96 percent; elk, 40 percent; moose, 88 percent; and bighorn sheep, 72 percent.

State and federal wildlife agencies, with help from the National Wild Turkey Federation, released 5,936 wild turkeys during the 1999 winter trapping and transfer season. During that time, efforts already underway in the western U.S. and Ontario were expanded and will continue there for the next three to five years. Texas and Delaware finished their restoration efforts, while North Carolina and New Jersey should be completed within the next year.

Hunters in Wisconsin took 407,555 deer in 1998 — 75,301 by bowhunters and 332,254 taken with firearms.

Answers: C, H, E, W, I, N, G.
CHEWING.

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(from Set No.2)

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Volume 71 ● No. 2
FEBRUARY 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS; POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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letters

Editor:

After a 20-year absence, I developed an irresistible urge to start hunting again. As I was checking out some of the many game lands in my area, I was distracted by some very pleasant sounds. One of which was the dry rustle of corn stalks. I can't think of a sound that I enjoy more: a five-acre symphony.

M.K. Herzing
Aspers

Editor;

I cannot let the November issue pass by without a "hats off" to Bob Sopchick for his "Home from the Hill." I sure liked when Charlie rang the bell eight times. Also, I really enjoyed "Successful Failures" by Linda Steiner.

R. Bender,
Beaver Springs

Editor:

The hunter from New Jersey who complained about nonresident archery stamps going from $5.75 to $26 might be even more distressed to learn that it costs $100 for a nonresident New Jersey archery license, plus $21.75 for the fall bow permit. I think we should have some type of reciprocal license fees with other states.

W. Marley,
Bensalem

Editor:

I support your response to the letter regarding the $26 out of state archery license fee.

Think of all the purchases a person makes in a year's time that last only moments or a couple hours at best. I bet nonresident hunters spend more than $26 just on gas to get here.

C. Testi,
Northeast

Editor:

I would like to be able to renew my *Game News* and order other Game Commission items over the Internet.

B. Shank

The Game Commission is in the process of upgrading our Web site, and we expect to provide that service in the near future.

Editor:

As an outdoorswoman and taxidermist, I enjoy your magazine and find it to be a great reference for my work. I especially love the way your stories emphasize safety. To ease my family's concerns when I go afield, I notify two dependable neighbors of where I'm going and contact them when I return. My next step is to purchase a cellular phone.

L. Koston,
Williamsfield, OH

Editor:

On behalf of Camp Swamp Hole in northern Dauphin County, I want to thank WCO Steve Hower and Trainee Eric Horsh for helping get a bear, our camp's first, out of SGL 264. It took us an hour and a half to get the bear — 396 pounds, field-dressed — the 500 yards out to the game lands road, and it was another two miles to our vehicles. These officers' assistance, sense of humor and professional demeanor were greatly appreciated.

E. Bechtel,
Loyalton

Editor:

It was great hearing from Keith Schuyler again, in the December issue. He was one of my favorites for many years.

F. Fritz, Jr.,
Bloomsburg

Editor:

A quick letter of apology to the Game Commission and the Collins Pine Company. My father and I have hunted in the Endeavor area of Forest County for more than 20 years, and we appreciate the access provided during deer season on the roads used for logging and gas well maintenance. We want to apologize for whoever it was that cut at least two trees to block the roadway and even placed their own lock on the gate after passing through. I'm sure we share the feelings of many other hunters who were delayed on the opening morning of buck season. I hope my son of age 10 will be hunting this same area in two years.

J. Pickens,
Murrysville

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.


DENNIS KARCHNER 1999

Something About a Gun

By Joe Parry

IT WAS William Shakespeare, I believe, who said, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." I doubt, however, that he was a hunter. If so, he may have added, "There's something about a gun that unites hunting men like brothers."

An elderly gent lived down near the end of our woodland road, in a humble little home that almost seemed like something out of a storybook. Every time one of us passed the other's home we'd wave, but that was pretty much all there was to our friendship. Yard work kept each of us busy throughout the summer. Winters were too miserable for either of us, old as we are, to get out and about — unless it was deer season. That in and of itself seems to warm the blood of most predatory men. Adrenaline flow carries strength to our aging legs, hips and backs, so that come the season for whitetails, we ancient ones appear as teenage athletes sauntering up the sides of the Endless Mountains. And hunting season is what finally brought the old man and me together.

I was nestled in a scooped out section of the mountain I call Big Leek Hill. It was opening day of deer season, albeit unseasonably warm, almost shirtsleeve weather. Early in the morning nine whitetails tiptoed by; a small buck in the scampering group was no more than 25 yards away. I was carrying a new Marlin Model 444P in 444-caliber, which at that distance would have killed the buck with nearly a ton and a half of energy. I chose to pass on this first little buck of the new season. At about 11 a.m. I headed down the mountain to the house for lunch. I'd already passed on the second buck of the day, at around 10:30. I was holding out for a dream buck I'd seen near what I refer to as "the lonely hemlock." I rough scored him through binoculars one morning as he chased off another buck from the does he was following, and figure he was all of 165 Boone & Crockett points. I called my son, Justin, out to have a look, and the words from his mouth were, "Oh my gosh, Pop, he's incredible. Biggest I've ever seen. How about you?"

"I'd say so, Son, and you know very well that I've lived at all four corners of the Lower 48. Why, the 8-point he chased away from his does was bigger than any mulie I've ever taken. I've seen deer with antler bases nine inches around, and the 8-point he chased off was all of that, likely bigger. High tines, too, most about eight, maybe nine inches and straight as sticks. Two incredible whitetails in one morning is almost too much for this old man's heart to take."

Justin asked softly, "Ya gonna kill 'im if ya get the chance, Pop?"

"Won't know, Partner, until the moment presents itself, if indeed it does. That buck didn't get as big as he is by being careless. Nor did the 8-point. I'd sure love the opportunity, though. Just to see them during buck season would be reward enough, but I never really know what I'm gonna do until the time comes. Reckon I've always been a fickle old poop."

Walking down the mountainside,

I spotted a speck of orange at a location I call "the funnel." It's a place where the deer almost have to cross to get to another mountain's cover. I detoured out of curiosity. I wanted to know who this hunter was.

As I got closer I noticed a scruff of snow-white hair sticking out from under his Elmer Fudd-like hunting cap. It was my elderly acquaintance from the end of our road, whose surname I knew to be Mancini. Not wanting to frighten him, because I felt he, like me, may be hard of hearing, I made the *psst* sound. It came out well. The old-timer turned toward me, smiled what I felt to be the warmest smile I'd ever seen from a man and softly said, "howdy."

I smiled in response and whispered, "Mornin', neighbor. Seen anything worthwhile?"

He spoke with a broken and heartwarming Italian accent. An accent I grew up with as I, too, am of Italian descent, and my grandfather spoke broken English. His accent, his way of pronouncing English words made him all the more lovable, and hearing Mr. Mancini was deja vu extraordinaire.

Grandfather passed away when I was in basic training, back in 1960. I got home to attend his funeral, but I miss him terribly. He was my hero. In fact, it was he, my father and a favorite uncle, Buck Budd, who introduced me to hunting back in 1954. I even had a few years' experience carrying the men's harvest and no gun and, as I said, there's something about a gun that brings men together intimately. Thus, I felt somewhat of an outcast.

"I no see a da one ting cept da daggonit does all mornin'. And dis a new gun a mine, juste bought, anna first new ting I ever have for to hunt wit donna shoot wort a beans. Why you sa neighbor, no?"

"Your neighbor I am, Mr. Mancini. So, you've seen nothing with antlers, huh?"

"Nading, young man, nading 'tall. Justa squirrels a diggin da nuts anna couple bigga, fatta does."

"How about coming home for lunch with me, Mr. Mancini? Perhaps we can work out an afternoon strategy, and if we're lucky, maybe one of us will score on one of the two big bucks I saw earlier this fall."

"Shore ting. Say, whattsa you name anyways?"

"Joe. Joe Parry. But long ago, before my grandfather changed it, our family name was Parisi. I'm Italian, too."

"Well daggonit, attsa nice ting to know. I taught so. You have gooda Romano nose. Giuseppe isa you name in Italiano, ya know it?"

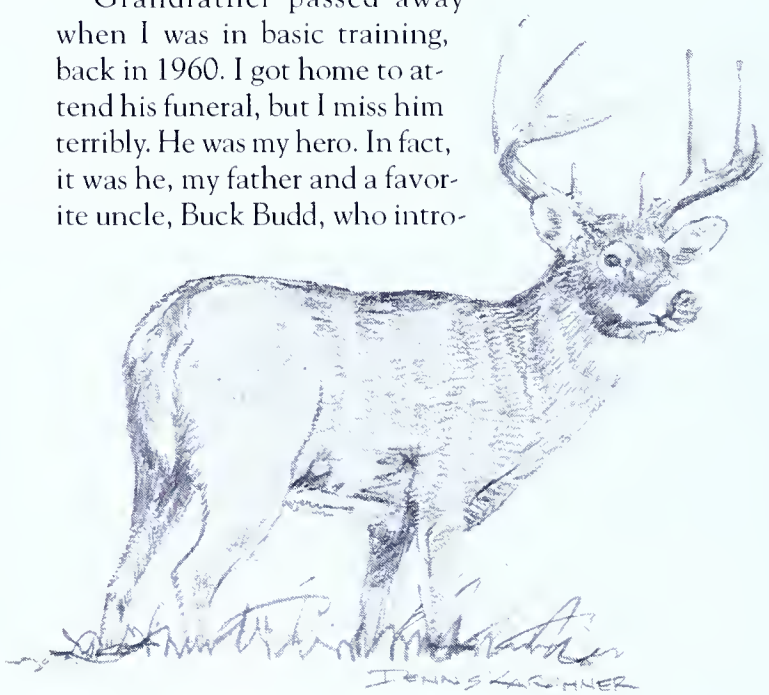
I said that I did, and he got up and we headed for the house for lunch.

"Whattsa dis a ting you calla shratasee?"

"It's strategy, Mr. Mancini."

"Pleasa, Joe, donn-ta calla me a Mister Mancini, my name a isa Louie, from Luigi in Italiano."

"Okay, Louie it is. Now tell me, Louie, what's the problem with your rifle? You mentioned it doesn't shoot worth beans?"



"Daggonit ting shootsa holes all over da paper targets anna not all a dem inna da bullseye. I dunna whattsa matter wita daggonit sing. You tinka you can fix, no?"

"'Well, maybe, Louie, maybe. We'll see what the problem is when we get to the barn."

He looked at me through proud hazel eyes in which I could see my own reflection and said, "Ya know, Giuseppe, dissa gun a mine is da first daggonit ting I ever boughta myself new. I never hadda monies tilla dissa year, an I was alla cited about it until I shotta da daggonit sing. Well she no shoots a too good. Make sa me sad a leetle bits, you know it?"

"I believe I know how you feel, Louie, but I think I already know what the problem is. Let me see it for a minute."

It was a gorgeous .308 Winchester in the Classic Model 70 Featherweight. The stock was well figured and breathtaking. Unusual for a production rifle out of the box. "Well, Louie, this is one of the finest guns a man could own. Called the rifleman's rifle because of its outstanding reputation and durability under tough conditions without problems occurring. It should shoot well at most any range. Let's look at it when we get to the house."

"Tanka you, Joe, tanka you veddy, veddy much. I'a justa hope itsa nading a too daggonit bad?"

At the house we ate sourdough bread, cucumber salad and huge squares of leftover lasagne, then washed it down with a non-alcoholic white wine, chilled for a week. He thanked me dozens of times for lunch, to the point where I was all but embarrassed. We went to the den and I took out my gun tool kit. I took the action from the bed of the stock, and sure enough, there were several pressure marks. Also, I had a suspicion that someone had tightened the wrong action screw first. Always, but always, however trivial it may sound, tighten the rear screw first. And bear down on it until you feel the beginnings of a hernia. This makes a world of difference in how well a rifle shoots.

I have a friend, Butch Murray from Erie, who bought a Sako in .243 that the owner claimed just won't shoot well at all. Butch brought it to me after having paid only $150 for it. I took it out of the stock, checked for pressure markings. There were none at all. "Nothing wrong in here, Butch," I said, "but let's try this one thing I learned long ago from my Uncle Buck Budd."

I placed the barrel back into the stock, placed the action screws in their respective holes and proceeded to bear down hard on the rear screw. I then finished tightening the front screw, and we took it out to the range that afternoon. Butch had fired it earlier, and his 3-shot group measured nearly 12 inches. After I retightened the action screws, however, the Sako shot 1-inch groups.

I sanded out the pressure marks on Louie's Winchester and smoothed it off with fine steel wool, then carefully set the barrel and action back into its wooden bed. I bore down on the rear action screw until veins in my forehead looked vividly reminiscent of purple nightcrawlers. We fired the rifle at my range in my back field. At 50 yards it hit about a quarter-inch high.

Louie said, "Sure, Joe, da ting will putta wonna shot a prettie gooda, but a number two, tree anna four will go a every daggonit place. Speshally atta hundred yardsa."

I decided to use one of my handloaded 165-grain boattail Barnes XLC coated bullet loads. This is what I used in the first round, and in my .30-06 Ruger, these precision bullets group an inch and under all day if, indeed, I do my part. I set up a new target at 100 yards and fired three of the handloaded cartridges. The shots formed a perfect triangle just about 3/4 of an inch.

"Wella owl be-a daggonit. I neber seena nading like at, Joe," Louie said.

We then headed for Big Leek Mountain where I'd secretly hoped and prayed Louie would get a shot at one of the two big bucks. I placed him in a good spot and said, "Those cartridges I gave you, Louie, will put down anything in North America. Just put the crosshairs where ya want 'em and shoot." I told him I'd circle the mountain and, I hoped, move one of the big bucks out of the thick stuff and into his shooting lane.

"Ya tink da daggonit ting a comma dis way, Joe?"



"Gonna be a lot of fruitless walking if one doesn't, Louie. Just sit real tight for about two hours. Give me time to circle the mountain. I feel pretty certain at least one of them is holed up in that acre or two of multiflora rose on the other side, and if I flush one, he's almost certain to come over the knoll here and head for the thicket behind the college. Good luck, Louie. See ya in a couple of hours."

He whispered, "Ya know, Giuseppe, I never shota deer inna all da years since I come from da ol' country. I woulda love ta do dat daggonit ting justa one time before I die."

I worked my way slowly around the mountain, and not 30 minutes after I'd left old Louie, I heard what I thought was his .308. Hoping so much that he had a buck, I continued my drive and returned to find Louie sitting on a big fallen log. In front of him lay the largest 8-point buck I'd seen in 44 years of hunting. "Hey, Louie, you got one of the big ones."

When the old man looked up at me without uttering a sound, his face was as white as an Ivory soap bar. "Hey ya, Joe. Yep, I gottsa him alright, but I don't know whatta do now. I never take a gutsa out of one before."

"Don't fret, Louie my friend, I'll take care of that."

"Boy a boy," Louie said. "You like a ma guide service man. Firsta ya take a care ma new rifle, den you clean uppa ma bigga buck, da first one I ever shoota, an I gotta paya you somma ting, Giuseppe."

"Louie, just knowing you, being your neighbor and friend is pay enough for me. Besides, you remind me of my long gone grandfather. Never mind the pay stuff."



Louie mentioned he would have the deer mounted. We tagged then dragged the deer about 1,000 yards to Louie's house, and I helped him skin and butcher it. He showed me around his cozy little home and sadly mentioned that his only son was killed in a helicopter crash in Vietnam. "I sure missa him, Giuseppa. I no be a da same since he go to heaven, ya know?"

No, I didn't know. No parent should live to see their child die, and I had two children at home. It made me think of the unthinkable.

Louie and I became close friends that winter. He was, aside from my grandfather, the kindest, most gentle, lovable, sincere and honest man I ever knew. He often called me his son, Giuseppe Parisi. It touched me in a way I've never before been touched. Then one dreary afternoon he read one of my older *Game News* stories, "On War and Whitetails" in the August 1995 issue, and afterward phoned me to come over for a visit, tea and Italian anisette cookies. I could tell from the tone of his voice he was a bit melancholy, perhaps thinking about his dead son. Nevertheless, I threw on my vest and went to his home.

At the door, Louie laughed and said, "Comma inna you besta guide a service

man." I laughed and said I might send him a bill yet if he didn't stop thanking me for what happened during buck season.

"Ya know, Joe, I no live too much a long. I like you ta know, I gonna leave you somma sing. Somma ting veddy, veddy nice when I go to hunta witta God. I hope you like."

I spent the better part of the afternoon with him. His wife, Mary, sat with us, quietly knitting him a sweater with huge pockets for "all the daggonit junks I carries arounda."

Mary had mentioned Louie's emphysema and heart condition, and sure enough, two weeks later, grand, old Louie passed away on the sofa, in his cozy, little cottage, with his newly knitted sweater on. God knew I would miss him, his bright, warm smile, his laughter at the slightest humor and those warm moments when I knew he saw his own dead son in me.

I went to the viewing but couldn't, for whatever reason, attend his funeral. To my heart, that's too final to conceive. I watched as they lifted his copper casket into the hearse, went to my car and headed for church to light a few candles in his honor. It was a long, tough day, and henceforth it would be one long, rather lonely life without Louie's laughter, warm smiles and friendship.

Later that month Louie's wife phoned. "Joe, do you have time to come to the house for a few minutes?" Certainly I did, and I left within five minutes of her call. She opened the back door and asked if I would sit and drink the tea and eat the anisette cookies she had prepared, and that she'd be back in a minute. When she came back in she had Louie's big 8-point buck mount and a long box that appeared brand new. "Louie left you this deer head, Joe, and whatever's in this box."

Tears welled up in my old eyes, for I already knew what the box held. I wasn't, however, prepared for the letter attached to Louie's once-used Winchester. "Giuseppe, I loved you like my own a son. I wanna you ta have dissa here gun anna buck head. I know you take a gooda care. Bless you, Joe. Love, Louie."

I left the house in a quiet mood, thinking, indeed, there's something about a gun. Something I was very thankful for. Tanka you, Louie. Tanka you, veddy veddy much. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Quality Venison II: All New Recipes and Deer Tales Too, by Steve and Gale Loder, Loder's Game Publications, P.O. Box 1615, Cranberry Township, PA 16066, 189 pp., $14.95, plus $3.50 s&h; PA residents add 6% state sales tax. The Loders' first cookbook, *Quality Venison, Homemade Recipes and Homespun Deer Tales*, published in 1998, was an immediate success, and this new book should be just as popular. **Quality Venison II** features more than 150 new recipes and two new categories, "Cooking Venison Southern Style" and "Preparing Venison Marinades & Sauces." Delicious yet easy to make recipes and clear directions on how to properly care for and prepare venison make both books popular for people who want to get the most out of their deer. (The Peppery Venison Loin Steak recipe is, like the authors say, "awesome.") Also included are more of Steve's hunting stories and other sections related to deer hunting. Those who have the Loders' first book will definitely want this one, and those looking for new ways to prepare venison may want to consider both.


AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
BIRDS OF
PENNSYLVANIA
GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON
SUBJECT Young orchard trees damaged by dee
LOCALITY Cumberland County.
PHOTO. BY Geo. M. Sutton

George Miksch Sutton

By Greg Grove

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD George Miksch Sutton peered into the darkness of a large, hollow, 20-foot log he had found while wandering in a woodland near his Texas home. He hoped he would find something worthwhile: a wildcat, perhaps, or maybe a water moccasin. As his eyes adjusted to the dim light inside, George realized he was looking at a turkey vulture. He already knew enough about birds to know that it was probably a female on a nest. Hoping to add to his specimen collection, George blocked one end of the log with large stones and then crawled into the darkness at the other end.

By the time he was one body length into the log, George knew he had made a mistake. The interior of the log was not quite so roomy after all. His arms stretched out ahead because there was no room for him to bring them back alongside his body. He could not gyrate his pelvis or wiggle his way backward, either. He had no choice but to continue forward.

After overcoming initial panic, George began inching toward the vulture, his clothing rapidly being shredded as it caught on splinters along the way. Then came the discovery that the vulture was not the only critter living in the log. A daddy longlegger trod over his hand. This was not a problem at first, but then came a few more, and a few more, until there were hundreds all over his face, neck and back. There was no choice but to squeeze ahead, crushing longleggers by the dozens.

Then, a fluffy sensation glided across his hand; it turned out to be two white-footed mice. In panic at the presence of the intruder, they sought shelter, scrambling over George's back and under his shirt. One mouse met its demise as it was squeezed between a human shoulder and hard wood. The other lodged in George's trousers, only to be discovered later, unharmed, at home when George pulled off what was left of his pants.

Near the vulture, the interior of the log became roomier, and George was able to move more easily. As George came closer, the vulture hissed and then disgorged its stomach contents onto George, trying to convince him that he was making a mistake (a conclusion George had long since reached). As the vulture backed toward the far end of the log, George saw a newly hatched chick. He picked it up, grabbed the mother by the leg, and somehow pushed past the rocks he had placed at the end of the log.

Outside, he tied the mother to a sapling. Trembling from the exertion, scratched and bleeding, clothes in tatters, George picked smashed longleggers from his skin, breathed deeply of the fresh air, and looked at a blue sky he thought he would never see again. The mother vulture remained surprisingly calm; she did not try to bite or struggle for freedom. By then George had lost his desire to collect the vultures, so he returned them to the log.

He then returned to his own home

to try to explain the condition of his clothing. Happily for George, to quote from his autobiography, his mother merely said, "Why, of course, pants need mending now and then." Every boy should have such an understanding mother.

By that spring of 1913, George Miksch (The unusual middle name, Miksch, was the family name of an ancestor) Sutton was on his way to becoming one of the country's best-known wildlife artists and scientists. Like most boys, then and now, George sought adventure and excitement, and often found more than he anticipated. This was to be a recurring theme during his long life and career. His curiosity and energy were seemingly without limit.

George Sutton was not a native Pennsylvanian, but between 1918 and 1924 he worked as an assistant in the Lab of Ornithology at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. Then, from 1924 to 1929, he served with the Pennsylvania Game Commission as the first "state ornithologist."

Sutton was born in Nebraska in 1898. His father was a minister and a college teacher of English and church history. During George's youth, his father moved often to new positions, and the Suttons lived in Nebraska, Oregon, Illinois, Texas, and finally in the northern panhandle of West Virginia, a few miles from Pennsylvania.

His interest in birds began early and only intensified as he grew older. This included a desire to draw birds as lifelike as possible, and from living specimens when possible rather than stuffed museum pieces. He collected birds (with a shotgun) and taught himself how to preserve specimens and eggs. He also kept live birds as pets. In Texas, once he captured and raised two young roadrunners, feeding them grasshoppers and snakes until they learned to hunt. They eventually learned to capture horned lizards (though only when very hungry) as described by Sutton: "Grasping the victim by the head . . . they beat it against a convenient stone. Thirty or 40 blows were sometimes needed to render him sufficiently quiescent for ingestion . . . occasionally, horned lizards were swallowed while yet quite alive, and had to be coughed up for further batting."

Long snakes also presented a problem. The birds would swallow and begin to digest one end of the snake, as far as possible, then walk around rather stupidly with the other end hanging from their mouths.

Moving with the family to West Virginia, the roadrunners learned to mingle casu-



ON OCTOBER 18, 1927, Sutton and Smith collected several bushels of dead hawks, primarily red-tailed and sharp-shinned hawks, killed that day and left scattered on the mountainside, just below the ridgetop.

ally with unsuspecting house sparrows. Having infiltrated the flock, the roadrunner would then make a sudden pounce and dine on a sparrow.

At Carnegie, George Sutton obtained his first bird related job by walking into the museum and introducing himself to its only staff ornithologist. Sutton offered to work as the man's assistant for whatever pay the museum could afford. The offer was accepted and thus began George Sutton's professional career.

He assisted in setting up nature displays and keeping track of the thousands of bird specimens the museum had accumulated from around the world. Most importantly, he began in earnest his career as a painter and book illustrator, and his reputation as an artist became solidly established and widespread.

While employed by the Game Commission in the 1920s, Sutton's duties ranged far beyond research on birds. For example, like today, there were widely divergent views on how the state's deer herd should be managed. In some parts of the state there were tremendous numbers of deer and not always sufficient browse. Farmers, orchard owners and nurserymen felt the impact, just as many do today. Hunters, of course, enjoyed the abundance of deer and protested vehemently any and all suggestions to curb the deer population.

During Sutton's first years with the commission, the agency instituted a doe season, and it was his job as the head of the Bureau of Research and Information to put together information for Game Commission personnel. Staff was to use Sutton's material to explain the need for a doe season to state residents, many of whom did not particularly wish to listen to the Game Commission's reasoning. To them, hunting doe was nearly the equivalent of stalking one's own mother.

Sutton was soon traveling across the state, sometimes giving two or three talks a day to clubs, school audiences and sportsmen's groups; the latter were sometimes not friendly. In one case, a disgruntled club chairman introduced Sutton without giving his name, saying, as Sutton recalled later, "These people in Harrisburg have sent someone to explain what they're doing, so here he is now."

In October 1927, Sutton and Game Protector Archie Smith visited a well-known hawk shooting lookout on Blue Mountain, near Drehersville. Hawks were known to pass this site in large numbers in autumn, especially on windy days. Knowing this, many people gathered on the mountaintop to shoot hawks, falcons, eagles and ospreys. To some, the shoot was simply sport. Farmers believed they were protecting their livestock, and some hunters, their game birds. Even some bird watchers favored the killing of certain hawk species that were known to prey on songbirds.

On Oct. 18, Sutton and Smith collected several bushels of dead hawks, primarily red-tailed and sharp-shinned hawks, killed that day and left scattered on the mountainside, just below the ridgetop. Two days later, Smith collected one more day's kill: 90 sharpshins, 32 redtails, 16 goshawks and 11 Cooper's hawks, and two peregrine falcons.

Sutton published an account of the hawk killing in an ornithological journal, helping to begin drawing attention to the needless slaughter. In 1934 a conservationist named Rosalie Edge purchased 1,400 acres on the top of Blue Mountain, including the lookout, and posted it against hawk shooting. The site became known as Hawk Mountain, now a world-renowned hawk watching site and a major landmark in our attempts to conserve wildlife.

While with the Game Commission, Sutton was occasionally called upon to assist in medical emergencies. Once

he had to make a mad dash to deliver anti-venom to a game refuge where the gamekeeper had been bitten on the hand by a copperhead. The man survived, though he lost some use of his arm and hand. Another time, Sutton was with a game protector who had just arrested a game violator. The distraught man carelessly propped his rifle against a tree, and then it fell over, discharged, hitting the violator in the foot.

Sutton himself needed emergency treatment in March of 1929. He was to give an evening program in Lock Haven, and upon his arrival earlier in the day, friends took him to a nearby gorge where peregrine falcons had been seen. Sutton saw no falcons, but he did see a raven fly from a large nest 50 feet up the face of a cliff. Still with the curiosity and spirit of adventure that sent him into the turkey vulture's log as a boy, George could not resist the opportunity to climb the cliff and inspect the nest, even though clad in "good clothing" for his speech that evening. Just as he was about to reach the nest, a rock he was standing on dislodged and Sutton fell straight to the base of the cliff. The result was a broken vertebrae, some broken ribs and a dislocated collarbone. He managed to walk to the car for his trip to the hospital, but he missed his talk that evening.

In his autobiography, he quoted a limerick from a Philadelphia newspaper describing his misadventure:

Doc Sutton once had a cravin'
For catchin' a Lock Haven raven
But he stepped off the edge
of a fifty-foot ledge
And the pieces were hardly worth savin'

Throughout his busy years with the Game Commission, Sutton continued to develop as an artist. His talent was already widely recognized and, whenever possible he did paintings for various book projects. These included W.E. Todd's monumental *Birds of Western Pennsylvania.* During this time he also completed a study of the bird life of the Pymatuning Swamp in Crawford County. Because of its far northwestern location and swampy, boggy character, Pymatuning was the nesting location for an interesting variety of birds, many of which did not otherwise breed in the state, or did so only rarely.

During his Pennsylvania years, Sutton went on many field trips to the Far North in association with the Carnegie Institute. One such trip became known as the Blue Goose Expedition. The blue goose, smaller than the familiar Canada goose, has a white head but otherwise uniformly dark plumage, more brown than blue. The blue goose is now known to be a color variant of the well-known snow goose. The snow and the blue often interbreed and the two forms are commonly seen migrating together.

In the 1920s, though, little was known of blue goose biology and it was thought to be a separate species. No one — except perhaps natives of far northern lands — knew where blue geese nested; they were believed to nest somewhere in the vast Hudson Bay area, or perhaps much farther north on remote sub-Arctic islands.

Sutton took part in the September 1923 Blue Goose Expedition. The expedition explored some of the James Bay area, including the southeastern corner of Hudson Bay. James Bay is a wild area, with shallow stormy waters and a rock-strewn bottom with virtually no slope. This lack of topological relief means that vast regions of the bay are tidal, covered by water at high tide, uncovered at low tide. The exposed tidal grounds provide ideal feeding areas for waterfowl and shorebirds. Sutton's goal was to collect blue geese for museum displays.

Sutton built several crude blinds and made mud decoys, hoping to lure geese as they migrated through James Bay. He wanted them close enough to study their behavior. On one occasion, he ventured

far out onto the flats and took a seat on a heap of grass he was using as his blind. Protected from the fierce winds crossing unchecked across the exposed flats, pushing through frequent snow squalls, he sat and waited. Soon there were geese nearby, and he became engrossed in his observations.

Oblivious to the passage of time, George gradually became aware that his legs and hips were becoming cold. Looking down he saw water trickling into his grassy nest. He then looked around and saw that he and the geese were essentially on a small island surrounded by the cold waters of James Bay returning on the high tide.

Most of the flats were under only a couple feet of water, but in some tidal creeks or trenches the water was already more than waist high. Well out from the usual high tide mark, George had to move fast. He had the presence of mind to collect two geese before making the long cold wade back to camp, holding equipment and geese above his head when fording the deeper waters of the trenches. Upon reaching camp, he was astonished to see the members of the expedition hastily packing to leave. The high winds had pushed the tide beyond the usual high mark and the campsite itself was under several inches of water.

The first nests of the blue goose were finally discovered hundreds of miles northeast of James Bay, on Baffin Island, by Canadian Dewey Soper in 1929. Sutton found a second nesting area a year later on Southhampton Island, north of Hudson Bay.

Sutton loved the Far North. He spent an entire year, from August 1929 to August 1930 on Southampton Island, not far from the Arctic Circle. There he lived with Eskimos and experienced long Arctic nights. He immersed himself in the Eskimo culture, even then already undergoing change after contact with "civilized" man.

Sutton learned, to some extent, to drive a dog sled (no snowmobiles in 1930). He went on hunts for polar bears, caribou, seals and walruses, and he learned to trap and prepare furs of Arctic fox and hares.

A highlight, of sorts, occurred during one wide-ranging caribou hunt. Sutton and two Eskimos spent a week in an igloo, trapped by a blizzard, far from the Eskimo village. The Eskimos spoke little English and Sutton little of their language, but they got along fabulously, playing cards, teaching each other the language, eating and sleeping away the hours.

For the Eskimos, the situation was not all that unusual, it was something they prepared for. Igloos were not used as permanent housing but as temporary overnight shelters much like we use tents. Sutton wrote a classic book, *Eskimo Year*, describing his unique experience.

In 1931 he again returned to the north, this time to Churchill, Manitoba, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. On that trip he became the first person to document the nest of a Harris's sparrow, one of the last North American bird species for which a nest had not been located.

By 1929, Sutton had decided to give up his job with the Game Commission and return to graduate study at Cornell. A true field biologist and artist at heart, Sutton felt he had to devote too much time to politics in Harrisburg, the doe hunting controversy being a good example. He received a doctorate in ornithology from Cornell in 1931 and remained at the university until 1942.

During those years, he continued to go on field trips. One memorable trip in 1935 took Sutton and others from Cornell into the swampy forests of the Tinsaw River area in Louisiana. Their goal was to find ivory-billed woodpeckers and record the calls of this magnificent, but vanishing, species.

At that time a few pairs were known to be present in Louisiana, Florida and possibly elsewhere, but already there were few people who could claim to have seen the species. The 1935 expedition, led by a local man, went deep into the forests, two miles beyond where their trucks could carry them and their equipment, before finally locating a mated pair of ivorybills. To get there, the men had to wade through long stretches of sometimes hip-deep swamp water. But they were successful in recording the bird's common calls, the only known records in existence.

The big woodpeckers, of course, were doomed. Each pair needed a large territory with many large dead trees that harbored their insect prey. Forestry practices of the time were not compatible with the continued existence of ivorybills. The last confirmed sighting of an ivorybill in the United States was more than 30 years ago. A few were found in Cuban forests in the 1980s, but none have been seen there since 1987 and it now seems likely the ivory-billed woodpecker is extinct.

During World War II, Sutton became a major in the Army Air Force. His job was to develop methods to improve Arctic survival techniques for troops stationed in Alaska, an appropriate task considering his Far North experience.

After the war, Sutton worked at the University of Michigan before becoming professor of ornithology at the University of Oklahoma in 1952. Perhaps a reflection of his birth in Nebraska, Sutton came to love the prairie environment of Oklahoma, and that's where he lived until his death in 1982. However, he continued to explore places as different as Iceland and Mexico. In 1969, at the age of 71, Sutton spent a month on Bathurst Island, some 500 miles north of the Arctic Circle, studying and painting birds with other naturalists.



DISPLAYING the curiosity and spirit of adventure he had as a boy, while trying to examine a raven nest in 1929 George Sutton fell 50 feet from a cliff, breaking vertebrae in his back, ribs and dislocating his collarbone.

George Sutton was a man of incredible energy, curiosity and devotion to his profession. His love of being in the field is best expressed in these sentences from the preface of another of his classic books, *Birds in the Wilderness*: " . . . some ornithologists are not quite happy unless they are 'on the go.' They pack field equipment with a rush, announce to their families and friends that they are off, and having disappeared for a 6-month stretch, they return with books full of notes, boxes full of specimens, and heads full of plans. 'Yes, we had a fine trip' they say. 'And now we want to get to British Honduras.' As soon as we've finished Saskatchewan we want to do British Honduras!

" . . . You'd understand me if ever you'd seen a White Gyrfalcon sitting by himself on an iceberg, his regal image sharp against the grayness of the sea, or an ivory-billed woodpecker, flashing his black and white and scarlet plumage across the sun-shafted darkness of the swamp lands that are his home." □



An About Face

By Karen Lippy

"JOHN'S BACK!" We all rushed out to see what he brought home. Three muskrats were laid out on the porch, looking like big brown drowned rats. I was nine years old and my sympathy was with the muskrats.

Our family consisted of five boys and one girl, me. Although we never went hungry, there was little extra cash. Each of us was expected to help pay for our school clothes, which we did by picking beans and cherries, mowing yards, shoveling snow and doing chores for neighbors. Two brothers, John and Randy, decided to trap furs. They must have been pretty good at it, because little bodies arrived regularly on our porch. The muskrats were bad enough, but when John brought home a fox, and I gently stroked the beautiful fur, I think my ideas regarding animal rights were formed. Reading stories about the massacre of birds and animals for fashion and "sport" hardened my resolve. As I grew older, I contributed to organizations that represented the rights of animals.

On one occasion I was visiting with friends when another guest arrived wearing a beaver coat. I described in great detail (according to the literature I had received) the suffering the animals had to endure for her vanity. With another friend, I debated ways we could interfere with hunters. I never followed through with those plans, and I feel it's important for you to understand why.

I became interested in bird watching and spent much time afield. It wasn't long before I began seeing many foxes with bare tails and bald spots, including one at Middle Creek that was almost completely bald. I also saw

strange behaviors in groundhogs; one actually came out on the road and attacked my tires as I was driving down the road, others were seen staggering in circles. My niece was bitten by a raccoon in her backyard and had to go through treatment for rabies. Burgeoning deer populations brought higher densities of deer ticks and an increase in Lyme disease.

I began to see that nature's methods of population control are far more agonizing to animals than a few hours in a leghold trap and, if left unchecked, animal populations can cause health hazards to humans. (I have never been persuaded that animals are more important than humans.)

I also realize that without predators, such as wolves and mountain lions, animal populations could increase to the point that they threaten the very habitat they need for survival. I see areas where deer, crowded into small islands of cover and surrounded by suburbia, devoured every bit of new growth, turning forests and woodlots into virtual deserts for other wildlife.

I've encountered many hunters on my birding excursions (I bird year-round and wear orange clothing during hunting seasons). Most were polite, and several even directed me to foraging flocks of birds. One greeted me with excitement when he saw my binoculars, and took me back to a flock of birds he had discovered. As we shared excellent views of yellow-rumped warblers and cedar waxwings, he was delighted to view the birds through my binoculars, and I was amazed that he, a hunter, could share my enjoyment of birds.

Game News also played an important part in my conversion from animal activist to concerned conservationist. My mother has always given the magazine as a Christmas gift to my brothers, and they pass it on to me. At first I wanted to read only the amusing Field Notes, but I quickly became a fan of Ned Smith's "Gone for the Day" column. Finally, I thought by reading some of the hunters' stories, I would be better prepared to argue my position as an anti-hunter.

Instead, I discovered that hunters shared many of my feelings of reverence for wildlife. I've found that many hunters work toward habitat restoration that benefits not only game species but birds, too. I could share the authors' joy of the hunt right up to the minute of the kill, and they gave me reasons to respect their need for that final moment.

I receive many magazines in the mail, but only in *Game News* could I read such an interesting mix of wildlife facts and hunting stories. No other magazine makes an attempt to bring hunters and non-hunters together on common ground. It was in *Game News* that I first learned of the hunter's role in establishing game laws to protect both game and non-game species. If *Game News* ceases to carry articles that "hook" people like me, who will share your contributions with the public?

I'm not in total agreement with some hunting fraternities' objectives. I am slightly amused that many hunters share the same goals of those of the so-called "Bambi crowd," in that they fight to keep deer populations higher than what biologists say is good for the overall health of the herd and the habitat. An animal activist's intent is to save all deer, and some hunters want to ensure there are so many deer that their chance of a kill is increased. Neither view considers the overall good of the herd or its impact on habitat.

I contribute money to the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and other worthy organizations, and I put a lot of time into habitat enhancement projects and public education about wildlife. I would personally support any new laws that would tax birdseed, optics and other items that would be used to create habitat for non-game species.

In spite of some reservations, I've come to realize that hunting is more beneficial than detrimental to wildlife. Although I still feel sadness when I see any animal die, I realize the necessity. Now I speak out for your right to hunt, and the need for hunting to sustain a balanced environment. My views have changed radically, due to a willingness to seek out true answers to tough questions.

I now challenge you to do some soul-searching of your own. I often notice in the "Letters" section in *Game News* that some people think owls and hawks are the main reason for the decline of pheasants and rabbits. If this indeed were true, it seems that when European colonists arrived, few game species would have existed on this continent. Predators were far more prevalent then than now. I submit to you that just as the passenger pigeon and other species that became extinct not solely from hunting, but from habitat loss as well, the same is true for ringnecks and cottontails.

I don't claim that raptors are innocent of taking any of these game species, but I feel their impact on the overall population is negligible. Because great horned owls also take raccoons and skunks, which prey on eggs and young of game birds, it balances out.

Today, I work with rehabilitators of songbirds and raptors. Far too often I'm called out to pick up a bird that has been shot. As a bluebird monitor at Codorus State Park, I've had many nest boxes shot to pieces by vandals. With numbers of hunters declining, sportsmen need to act responsibly and encourage other hunters to do so. They need people like me. Hunters need to realize that every encounter with nonhunters can influence their image of all hunters. Will your actions help change the views of an anti-hunter, or will your behavior add another name to the mailing lists of those who seek to end your hunting heritage? □



Cover Painting by Stan Beloncis

THIS MONTH'S COVER depicts a scene that was common on small farms in bygone years — snow, a beagle, a bunny and a hunter in an old, brown canvas coat. Although cottontails aren't in many places in the numbers they were years ago, due to habitat loss and other factors, they can still be found in suitable cover and are still pursued by diehards with beagles. According to the Game Commission Game Take Survey, there were 911,003 rabbits taken in the 1998-99 seasons by 242,509 hunters, which translates into nearly four bunnies per hunter. In the 1983-84 seasons, 2,156,565 cottontails were taken by 738,970 hunters — nearly three rabbits per hunter. Get out this winter and enjoy a good old American tradition.

Not Your Average Walk In The Woods

By John W. McGonigle
Photos by the author

THE LICENSE PLATES in the parking lot were the tip-off — B-OWL (from Idaho) and SALMNDR (PA) — were a dead give away something out of the ordinary was going on. Believe me, it was.

On June 4 and 5, 1999, 168 scientists, naturalists and experienced nature lovers converged on SGL 211 in northwestern Lebanon County for a "Bioblitz," a scientific survey of flora and fauna. Also involved were 57 others who helped make the comprehensive survey work and nine media types to record the event.

Birders made up the largest group, with 55 participants. They were followed by 43 vascular plant researchers, 40 people searching for terrestrial (land) insects, 38 people surveying mammals, and 37 looking for reptiles and amphibians. Aquatic insects garnered 21 researchers, while three protists (they study unicellular organisms, including algae, and other organisms that are not easily classified as either plant or animal) and fungi experts were there and six bryophyte (mosses and liverworts) and lichen types. Trust me, there was an abundance of serious brain power present, and those involved were nice, interesting people with a burning love for their area of expertise and nature as a whole.

Visiting interns from Hawk Mountain Sanctuary traveled farthest to the site, coming from Spain, Columbia and Mexico; all were happy to be participating. Most naturalists came from



WHILE the Bioblitz had multiple objectives, the primary ones were to establish baseline information on all plant and animal life on the site.

in state, but there were also specialists from Delaware, Virginia, Ohio and New Jersey. Unofficially, but noted at the beginning of this article, one car was spotted with an Idaho license plate and there was also one from Montana.

The 10-square-mile area surveyed is a beautiful, mixed-hardwood forest bisected by Stony Creek, a small, recovering trout stream. Several small meadows, wetland areas and scattered stands of hemlocks dot the area. The land is managed by the Game Commission and is part of the 1.4 million acres of game lands purchased primarily through funds derived from the sale of hunting licenses. It is a lovely piece of property worth visiting by hunters and non-hunters alike.

While the Bioblitz had multiple objectives, the primary ones were to establish baseline information on all plant and animal life on the site. This information can

be used to determine the area's biodiversity, as a management tool and, perhaps most importantly, as a measuring device or benchmark from which future biological surveys of the site can be compared.

Jerry Hassinger, supervisor of the Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Section, set up and directed the event. "I went to the scientific community and enlisted their aid," said Hassinger of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey, a group he helped establish and part of the group doing the Bioblitz. "By involving these scientists we can focus the attention on the environment.

"We're getting only a snapshot of the area, not the full picture," said Hassinger of the 24-hour Bioblitz, "but it's the most comprehensive survey ever done on public land." He wistfully expressed a desire to have had access to a similar survey from the late 1800s to compare the current survey with and said, "I hope this survey is used later as a comparison study."

The Bioblitz was a collaborative effort between the Game Commission, the Biological Survey, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the National Guard, and federal and state resource management agencies and scientists from more than 50 organizations including: Penn State, Carnegie Museum, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Academy of Natural Science, Hawk Mountain and others. Musing on the accumulated scientific expertise Hassinger said, "It would probably cost more than $50,000 if we had to pay for this Bioblitz."

Also assisting in the massive undertaking were members of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Audubon Society. According to Executive Director Cindy Dunn, Audubon members filled a special role as guides because, "Many of us have crawled all over that tract for years." Dunn said that, "most Audubon members get out there and see things directly," suggesting that their hands-on approach was what gives Audubon credibility. Dunn also said that Audubon would likely use the Bioblitz model to survey some of the 72 other important Bird Area Sites identified in the state.

In many cases, participants could simply identify a specimen and record it. Numerous plants and insects, though, had to be collected and returned to the base camp or lab for positive identification. For rare species it



GAME COMMISSION biologist Jerry Hassinger said that the 24-hour Bioblitz was only a snapshot of the area, but that it's the most comprehensive survey ever done on public land.

was necessary for a "voucher specimen" to be collected to prove its existence on the site. In effect, the collected specimen vouches for its own existence.

Hassinger spoke of the need for scientific biological surveys, explaining that, "Our wildlife problems are getting more intractable. Expanding development and the resultant loss of habitat are causing serious problems for wildlife."

An enjoyable and interesting part of my visit to the survey site was speaking with the participants. Scott Bearer, a seasonal Game Commission employee, was driving the shuttle van, waiting for evening and the highlight

of his participation, capturing bats. "We'll use mist nets," said Bearer, "and use the cries of already trapped bats to lure others." He indicated that the bats are curious and are often attracted to the sound of captive bats.

When I spoke with outdoor writer and retired teacher Kermit Henning, he was working on his specialty, locating and identifying edible plants. He had already gathered more than 40 species, including the common dandelion, yarrow, mayapples and the less common sweet fern, teaberry, wintergreen and spice bush. "I haven't found a wetland habitat yet," said Henning, indicating that there would be more edible species found there. "Many of the plants I'm collecting can be used in a salad," said Henning, "others are cooked and some are used primarily as condiments." He was hoping to find 70 to 80 species, but eventually settled for a very respectable 60.

Robert (RP) Withington III, a Penn State Entomology grad student, found a bonanza that helped increase his total count. "I found a dead deer," he said with relish, "and pulled a bunch of things off it, including a couple of species of rove beetles, hister beetles that were feeding on maggots, and four or five species of flies." His brief interview was taken in the dining tent filled with delicious food, and in his excitement, he didn't seem to notice the incongruousness of the situation.

One of the most popular folks at the gathering was Randy Swank, a volunteer assisting Indiana University with its Herps (reptiles and amphibians) Atlas Study. A full time carpenter, Swank also volunteers at the Wildwood Nature Center in Harrisburg. Not to diminish Swank's pleasant personality, but his popularity had much to do with the several snakes he captured. While the large black snakes he displayed are not poisonous, they certainly attracted attention. It seemed people were either fascinated by them and couldn't get close enough or were repulsed and couldn't stay far enough away; there were several people who, while conversing with others, not only maintained a safe distance, but also kept a wary eye on the reptiles.

Long-time friend Laurie Goodrich, Senior Naturalist at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, was part of a group of eight volunteers from the sanctuary, including five interns and three staffers. "We're primarily taking part in the birding aspect of the survey," said Goodrich, "although we have one person assisting with the butterfly count." Like Bearer with the bats, Goodrich and her group used mist nets to capture birds. Ovenbirds and red-eyed vireos were the most common birds found on the survey site. Being from Hawk Mountain, the group was pleased to count several hawks, including sharp-shinned, a red-shoulder and some broad-winged hawks.

Penn State Professor Dr. Michael Patrick was present to survey parasites found on small mammals. While waiting for the trapped animals, he shared some



VOLUNTEER Randy Swank, assisting Indiana University with its Herps Atlas Study, cataloged several snakes at the Bioblitz.

interesting information related to one of our most common parasites, ticks. More specifically, deer ticks, the kind that is causing apprehension because it is capable of carrying Lyme disease. Lest you think that areas without deer are free of deer ticks, Patrick informed me that the deer mouse is also a common carrier of deer ticks.

The short and simple of it is that deer ticks can carry Lyme disease and dog ticks don't, but telling the two apart is difficult, especially when they are young. According to Patrick, the young of both dog and deer ticks (yes, he used their Latin names) have six legs while both adult species have eight legs. "A very small tick with eight legs is a deer tick, thus capable of carrying Lyme," said Patrick. You will likely need a 10-power magnifying glass or loupe to count their legs, but doing so may put your mind at ease.

Adult male deer ticks measure approximately 1/32 inch by 2/32 inches and a female measures slightly more than 1/32 inch by 3/32. The best description I can give of the deer tick nymph is to say that it appears to be the size of two dots from a medium tipped ballpoint pen placed as close together as possible; the deer tick nymph is capable of causing Lyme disease.

The author wishes to thank Jerry Hassinger for his invaluable assistance with this article.

A good tip from Patrick for sportsmen returning from tick infested areas is to toss all their clothes into a hot dryer for 15-20 minutes. "The high heat will cause dehydration," said Patrick, "causing the ticks to die." It works, I've tried it several times and found from two to five dead ticks in the drier's filter each time.

While they were in too much of a hurry to talk, I did impose upon Claudia Violette and her husband John Grehan to pose for a photograph; I just had to capture the couple with their butterfly nets. They work together at the Frost Entomological (insect) Museum at Penn State, one of the best in the world, where he's the Assistant Curator and she's an entomologist and writer. They appeared to be having a wonderful time as they headed back to the field, arms around each other's waist and laughing as if they hadn't a care in the world.



THE BIOBLITZ was a collaborative effort between the Game Commission, the Biological Survey, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the National Guard, federal and state resource management agencies and scientists from more than 50 organizations.

"We'll have a good idea of what we have in terms of number of species by the time we leave tonight," said Hassinger on Saturday. According to Hassinger it will take more than a year for all the species to be identified but, "We'll have a preliminary study in two or three months," he added.

The Bioblitz volunteers were dedicated to their task and were having fun; camaraderie and good cheer was evident even as the hours ticked on and fatigue set in. The Bioblitz ended with a picnic and very preliminary results. Pride was evident on the faces of the participants, and as they made their good-byes and headed for their respective homes, a feeling of near sadness mingled with the joy they felt over completing their task. □



Last Dance

By Tom Betts

EVEN IN THE dead of a Pennsylvania winter, the meadow and its thickets are appealing. The bottomland is rich, its tiny meandering stream trickling with open water amidst all the snow. Sloughs of skunk cabbage will appear within weeks, at each gentle curve. Here, too, flourish thornapples and multiflora rose, honeysuckle and dogwood, alders and black willow, the combination forming a canopy over all that will be forever damp. Up a short hill from this marshy area are acres and acres of perfectly flat pasture, brushy now from years of inactivity. Soon, spikes of green grass will emerge, followed by fresh shoots of goldenrod. In the hush of the winter evening there is a twitter of wings, then a cheerful warble. The woodcock, after weeks of migration flight northward, spies the familiar valley and settles down.

I'm not sure when it was, or how it was, that I first became so enamored with the American woodcock. Perhaps my feeling developed from Aldo Leopold's marvelous essay "Sky Dance" in his renowned *Sand County Almanac*. Or maybe I became cu-

rious when I saw the strange bird dart in crooked flight across the road in front of me. Quite likely, though, it was the astonishment that registered upon the face of my friend, Gregg Rinkus, when he discovered that, although I appreciated so much in our natural world, I was not a watcher of woodcock.

But whatever the influence, in recent years my evenings in March, April and May have been reserved for the charming little woodcock. The timberdoodle puts his best show on not in the fall, when he becomes legal game, but in the spring, when he's back from his winter home and setting up his territory. It is in these late winter and early spring evenings that woodcock become so captivating.

And so it was on this particular evening. For weeks I had been delighting in the woodcock's springtime show alone, but on this March evening my father came with me. Certainly we could have been engaged in dozens of other activities that evening and, indeed, many would have thought us crazy as we lay on our backs in a damp field while wet snow flakes swirled all around us. But we were right where we wanted to be, and we weren't leaving until the performance, including the encore, we had come to see was completed.

We paid for our seats only by weathering the elements, but we would have gladly paid more if anyone had asked. It was "theater-in-the-round" this night, and we had chosen a seat just to the east of the stage for the best possible view of the production. No one else was in attendance, which, I suppose, may seem strange. But I almost always make up the entire audience. I like it that way. So do the performers.

My father, I think, was growing impatient. I had explained to him many times about the dramatic and exciting spring sky dance of the male woodcock. And he had listened intently and had finally been convinced to attend one of the performances. But so far I had shown him only a long, cold walk through hawthorns in an icy bog, and now a cold and quiet wait in a desolate field.

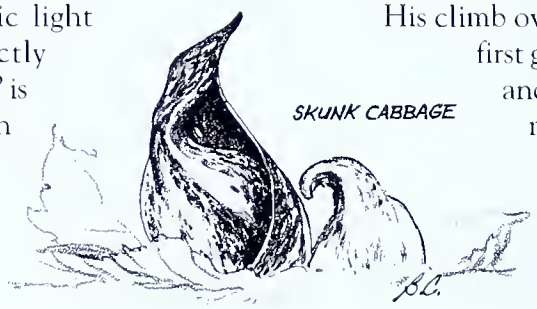
"Let me tell you about this woodcock," I said, forgetting for a moment that he'd probably seen more of the birds in his days afield than I would ever see. "He's a chunky little bird, almost comical to look at, with huge, dark, bulging eyes, short legs, a long, long bill and a stubby tail. You'll have to look close to see him, for he's all brown and black, like the decaying leaves down in the woods where he spends most of his time. He loves earthworms, which he feels for in the mud with his long, probing bill. And he'll also take snails, grasshoppers, frogs, salamanders, various flies and insects — almost anything that lives in the wet woods. Some people call him the timberdoodle. I've even heard names like wood snipe, bog bird, big eyes and night peck. Populations are way down now, because of development and the widespread loss of habitat — like that swampy area we just came through."

The large flakes of snow continued to drift down, but even with the snow, there was a purple tinge to the twilight, and I could sense that the show would soon begin. "What we're going to see tonight is the male's spectacular courtship flight. Aldo Leopold has a nice essay on this strange occurrence in his *Sand County Almanac*. He calls the whole affair the woodcock's 'sky dance', and it's certainly one of my highlights in the outdoors each year. The show should be starting shortly."

There was no fanfare to this performance, no opening act or orchestra prelude, no printed programs, no ushers guiding people to their seats, no impresario to welcome an enthusiastic audience. There was no one to announce that the show was about to begin, and there was no curtain to raise.

No fanfare, to be sure, but there was a dimming of the lights. On our backs in the violet evening, eyes focused skyward, the wide world faded out. Images that moments before had been vivid against the pastel glow in the west — the skeletal trees and low-hanging clouds — now grew vague, all shade and shadow. It was time.

Anticipating the opening act, I recalled for my father the words composed by Leopold for his memorable essay. The show begins promptly when "a romantic light intensity of exactly 0.05 foot-candles" is reached. Though we had no way of measuring the intensity, I had been in attendance often enough during the past several weeks that I knew the performers must surely be making their way to the stage by now.



We could no longer make out the big flakes of snow drifting down, but nearby tufts of grass were dusted, and our clothes were wet through. A wayward flake or two tickled my nose, melted, and slipped along the contours of my chin and into the opening at the top of my shirt. Quietly and patiently I waited, shivering, hoping desperately that the show would go on.

Then, with the same gentleness as falls the late spring snow, the first performer, air-borne, descended to the stage. A rapid series of high-pitched chirps and squeaks filtered down through the fading light, and long before we could see him I was able to alert my father. His twittering became louder and ever more rapid as he spiraled down and down, seemingly in free-fall, and then ceased when he came to rest on the ground, not eight feet from us. In the stubble we could make out the woodcock perfectly, we had chosen ideal seats.

At once the bird began to produce his distinctive *peent*, a sharp, buzz-like call that announces his location to adoring females. The peenting continued at five second intervals for several minutes. He was close enough that we could clearly see his head lurch backwards with each peent, and we could even discern the guttural croak that comes just before. And then, without any warning whatsoever, the woodcock erupted into flight with a squealing clamor of wings.

His climb over the meadow was at first gradual and then steep, and he quickly gained so much altitude that we had trouble following him in the gray skies.

As he commenced his first wide circle we lost him altogether, although we could chart his course from the screeching of his wings. Round and round he went, awe inspiring in his determination and curious behavior. Were there females present? We had perceived none. We knew only that whatever was in attendance had to be immensely impressed.

In just a moment the bird began his descent, evident as the squeaking twitter of wings became the cheerful warble that Leopold had suggested, "a March bluebird might envy."

"He's coming down," I explained. As luck would have it, our eyes picked him up again. We noticed that his circles grew ever tighter and tighter, and faster and faster. Then, abruptly, the bird crumpled as if shot, and fluttered aimlessly to the earth. At just the last instant he broke his fall and released his landing gear, softly settling down, inches from where he had taken off. Thence he resumed peenting.

We watched this remarkable performance, and those of several other tireless birds, until darkness consumed the scene

and we could see no more. Then we rose from the matted grass and groped our way back down the steep slope, back through the woodcock's daytime home of marshy underbrush and thickets of thornapples. "That," exclaimed my father, "was some show."

We agreed then that what we had just watched belonged to that chapter of nature's most magical moments, the one that includes the drumming of the ruffed grouse, the ascent of the waterfalls by the Pacific salmon, the strut of the wild turkey gobbler, the howling of wolves, the yipping of coyotes, the bugle of an elk and the yodel of a loon.

"You're welcome to come anytime," I offered. "The show will continue for at least another month. And best of all, I can guarantee that in this exact spot next year, this very bird, or one that takes his place, will return to perform the same exciting ritual all over again."

Now it's the following winter, and as far as the eye can see there's mounds of clay and broken shale. High walls surround gaping chasms of spoils, and the exposed seams of glossy black coal are evident. In one of these craters the iron-green water of a sterile pond is stagnant and still. Yellow-helmeted workmen scramble in flurries of activity amid giant belching, assaulting machines. Drowned by the clatter of engines and backup whistles and shouted instructions is a twitter of wings, a cheerful warble. But there is no pasture, no thicket and no wandering stream. The woodcock, weary after weeks of migration flight northward and now terribly confused, looks to settle down but then flies on. □

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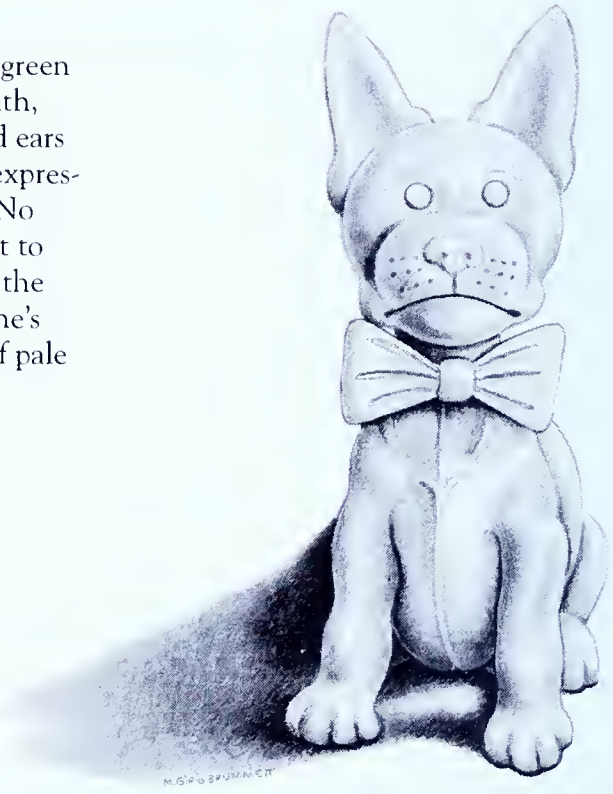
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The Green Dog



HE'S a homely thing, the green dog. Down-turned mouth, head too big, oversized perked ears shaped like spear points and expressionless Orphan Annie eyes. No pedigree would claim or admit to him. In a sitting posture with the head quartering to the right, he's eight inches high and made of pale green ceramic, frozen in senselessness. His glazed, wide bowtie actually adds to his poor looks. The bowtie may have once been yellow, a supposition supported by traces of a crusty egg-like stain in the folds. The remainder is the same pale green homely hue. Not much of a keepsake, but he belonged to my father and that is enough. Throughout my earliest childhood, my teen years and beyond, the green dog sat idly by. The memory of it surfaces without warning and never fades or changes with time.

My first recollection of the green dog is from when I was about three years old. My parents built our Fellsburg home a room at a time while living in the portions that were nearest completion. At one time, our house consisted of two rooms — a kitchen and an adjoining bedroom. (To use a bathroom, we trudged up the road to my grandparents' house.) A thin red curtain separated the two rooms. The kitchen light through the curtain enveloped my sister and me in a warm, red glow that filled the room we shared with my parents.

One morning I awoke to the warmth and whimpering of our newest family member — a droopy-eared beagle puppy

By David W. Evans

inching his way up my chest. I hugged him as his tiny tongue licked my face. The green dog was there, too, sitting on my father's maple dresser.

We named the pup Duke, and he became my best buddy. Duke and I literally grew up together, sharing cool spring rains, hot summer afternoons and at least one dog biscuit that I can recall. During the autumns, my father taught me the woods and the fields, while Duke's natural instincts guided his becoming a fine tracker.

Opening day of general small game season was magical, and preparing for it was a ritual. The night before, we would sit in the kitchen and reminisce about previous opening days while drinking in the sweet fragrance of fresh rolls being baked by my mother. After downing a satisfying share of the buttered warm rolls, we turned to the business of cleaning the shotguns. The image of the kitchen light mirrored inside the polished pipe when I peered through the breech of my single-shot, the shucking sound of Dad's slide action, and the aroma of solvent and oil are nostalgic memories not revisited enough. Knives sharpened and shotshells ready, we hung our canvas jackets on the clothesline in the basement and put away the cleaning kit. Dad kept the kit in the bottom drawer of his dresser. When the drawer was opened and closed, the green dog shook, much like Duke trembling with anticipation upon seeing Grandfather, Dad and me loading our hunting gear into the car.

Seasons passed and one day we lost Duke on Copperhead Hill above the Youghiogheny and West Newton; he just disappeared. By then he was blind in one eye and his scenting ability was essentially gone. We took him afield because we didn't have the heart to leave him at home. My father said Duke wandered off because he didn't have the heart for us to watch him die.

That winter Dad and I went to Andy Jugan's place and picked out a new pup. Andy had the best line of beagles in Rostraver Township. In honor of our previous beagle, we named the pup Duke, and he was all mine. The bond that forms between a child and his dog is special and different from any other friendship. Duke and I loved each other dearly. During the first winter, we played hide and seek in the house, which had long since been finished. I remember hiding once behind my parents' bedroom door and pulling it back against the wall. While the puppy hunted me down, I peered out between the wall and the door's edge. In the darkened room, I saw the green dog vacantly looking my way from the top of Dad's dresser, as Duke began whining and scratching at the bottom of the door opposite my feet.

During the summer, our favorite game was racing each other outside in laps around the house. As Duke grew and became faster, I could no longer sustain a lead. After he would pass me, I'd reverse direction, laughing, knowing that we'd soon pass each other going opposite ways. Then Duke would spin around and give chase, again passing me, after which I'd again reverse direction. One time he didn't catch me, and I couldn't find him. Eventually, I went into the house and found Duke patiently sitting in the bathtub, waiting. He loved getting a bath. Apparently he had slipped into the house, unnoticed, through a slow closing screen door after my brother came outside.

During the fall after I had turned 16, Dad allowed me to hunt on my own for the first time. Every day after school, Duke and I combed the gray woods, swept the amber fields

and threaded the rusty briars. Duke was absolutely the finest beagle I have ever seen. He ran rabbits and pheasants, and he would retrieve, beg, shake hands and even take to water. Always eager, obedient and with endless endurance, he was terrific.

One November evening a few years later my father phoned me at Penn State to tell me that Duke was missing. They had gone hunting the previous Saturday and Duke was looking for me from the start. While Dad pushed a thicket, Duke crossed the creek to the other side and entered a valley of heavy woods that we rarely hunted. Dad neither saw nor heard him again. Other hunters and volunteer firemen aided in the search, but no leads were uncovered. My hunting partner was missing, and I could do nothing.



A couple of weeks later I came home for Thanksgiving. Hunting on Thanksgiving Day was a tradition for me, regardless of weather or my health. I'd follow the softly gurgling creek downstream beneath the pines well away from buildings and, for added safety, cut across a field before unleashing Duke. We'd hunt the entire morning and return home as preparations for the big Thanksgiving dinner were underway. Wearily shuffling in from the quiet cold to a warm home filled with the scents of roasting turkey and baking pies was always wonderful, but that day was different. Hunting without Duke was lonely. As I encountered familiar fencelines, brush piles, orchards and creek banks, each gave up harbored memories of outings with Duke. Clearing through brambles, I imagined beyond reality that Duke would be patiently sitting on the other side, waiting.

My spirits were low as I stowed my gear back at the house when the phone rang. Someone called in response to a notice that Dad had run in the newspaper lost and found column. Because the caller lived nearly 20 miles away, we were doubtful and guarded against being too excited. We made the trip, but the beagle wasn't Duke. The ride home was silent. We knew that Duke was gone forever. I laid the car keys in a brass plate next to the green dog. I felt as empty as the green dog's eyes. The family was heartbroken.

My college years were a difficult time for my family. My sister divorced; my brother left school; my parents divorced; my mother and sister moved to California; and, my father and I had a disagreement and stopped communicating. Our house was sold, and I was invited to claim anything that had been left behind. Pulling into the driveway, I recalled helping Dad shovel it free of snow, his boyhood stories of trapping the stream that coursed through our property, my learning to bat opposite hand to avoid hitting into the creek, and his teaching me to shoot a bow on our archery range.

Inside the house, I moved awkwardly from room to room — a stranger in the place where most of my memories had been born. Perched alone on the kitchen counter next to an old two-slot toaster destined to be tossed, the green dog pleaded with abandoned eyes. He was the only thing that I walked out with.

Stepping into the car, I looked at Duke's house. He had favored sitting on the roof as the box elder shadows slowly crawled over the lower yard. The roof was bare. I backed the smoking car out of the driveway for the last time.

Following graduation I moved to Virginia and began a career. During my time away, I received word that my father had a heart attack but was recovering. I wrote him a letter and he wrote back. Whether it was shame, spite, guilt or fear — I don't know — but I never opened the envelope. I laid the letter on my dresser and sat the green dog on top. During my move to Maryland, the unopened letter was lost and the green dog's head and left ear were broken off. The green dog went into storage with its broken parts. I moved back to Pennsylvania, married and happily reconciled with my father, but rural living was replaced by suburbia, which was an inappropriate setting for a hunting dog. Without a dog, small game pursuits seemed hollow and gave way to big game adventures. The green dog was rescued from storage but stayed in a box, broken.

Years passed and my marriage ended in failure. I remained nearby to be close to my children. While they grew, and with time, I hoped to reassemble my own life. Reassembling the green dog took only moments and glue.

Re-reading Ned Smith's "Gone for the Day" while lying in bed one night, I stretched to turn out the light and froze. My eyes had fixed upon those of the green dog that sat atop my dresser. We stared blankly at each other. I realized that I knew nothing of its story. I had no recollection of my father ever speaking of it — where it came from, how or when he got it and, above all, why he kept it.

A few weeks later, the kids and I made our annual August trip across the state to visit my dad. Sitting on the back porch catching up on news of friends, changing and unchanging places and laughing at stories being retold, I thought about the green dog. I asked Dad about it and what he could tell me. He thought for a while, shook his head and chuckled. "Don't know where it came from. It's just always been around. It's a homely thing, isn't it?"

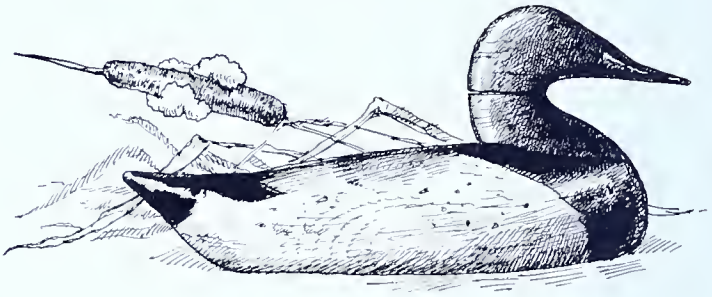
My father passed away suddenly on the evening of December 11, 1995. Earlier that afternoon, I received a birthday card mailed from him a couple of day's before. I didn't get the chance to thank him. I placed the card next to the green dog on my dresser; they still sit there today. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Modern Sporting Rifle Cartridges, by Wayne Van Zwoll, published by Stoeger Publishing Company, 5 Mansard Court, Wayne, NJ 07470, 310 pp., $21.95 plus $3 shipping. This book is a launching pad for anyone eager to know more about the history and makeup of sporting cartridges and ballistics. Illustrated with hundreds of photographs and backed up by dozens of tables and schematic drawings, this book tells the story of how rifle bullets and cartridges were developed. Descriptions and loads for every American-made cartridge, from the .17 Remington to the .460 Weatherby Magnum, make up much of the book.

MADE BY HAND

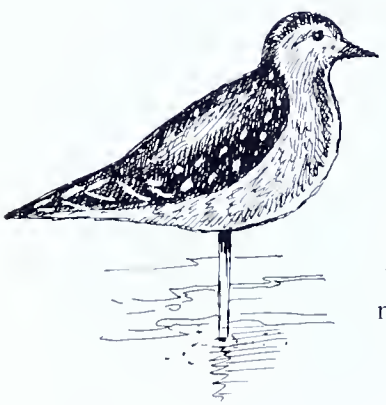


MY FRIEND BILL is a nationally known decoy maker who makes hunting rigs for serious waterfowlers throughout North America. It is hard for him to keep up with the demand, and he often works late into the night carving duck heads, drawknifing cork bodies or painting rows of mallards, cans, geese and other species of waterfowl. Most recently he carved a flock of plovers for a gunner who was hunting the swift shorebirds in Ireland. At bear camp he brought along his canvas tote bag of bandsawed duck heads, carving knives and whetstones to while away the evening hours carving decoy heads for his next order. One evening I picked up one of his handmade knives, a chunk of basswood and tried my hand at carving a mallard head.

Three hours and three Band-Aids later, I held my duck head at arm's length and studied it. Although the symmetry was a bit off, I've drawn enough ducks to see that the proportions were there, but compared to one of Bill's masterful mallard heads, I could see the flaws in my carving. It lacked some grace in the eye recess and where the bill flows into head. Bill proclaimed it an excellent effort and offered me a job, but said that I'd have to step up production by two-thirds, since it takes him about an hour to carve a head, and that I would have to pay my own hospitalization as I'd probably need a blood transfusion every other day.

Although Bill's decoys command much higher prices than factory dekes, it's easy to appreciate the time and skill involved after trying it yourself. Traditional waterfowlers who hunt over these custom rigs swear by them, recognizing that these artful spreads are one of the vital elements in the composition of the hunt. Plastic birds may produce the same results, but for the purist, the aesthetic quality of the hunt is greatly enhanced when ducks drop into these handcrafted fowl.

During the last several years there has been a renewed interest in original, handmade things brought on by an aging generation of baby boomers who want to rediscover or possess part of a lost heritage. Fueled by a surging economy, many craftsman, custom gunmakers and other artists are booked months, even years, in advance. Handmade things certainly are special, things like blackpowder guns and accoutrements, traditional archery gear, original art, double guns, turkey calls, nesting boxes, homemade jellies, knives, hickory rockers, quilts and much more. In these things we can recognize the individual style of the makers, admire their techniques, appreciate their attention to detail. But there are other, enduring qualities that live within these things, qualities not evident at first, but that are revealed through use and study.



I have an antique, shot-studded canvasback decoy that I con-

PENN'S WOODS SKETCHBOOK

BOB SOPCHICK

sider a work of art. I have included it in several still-life paintings and even a wallpaper border I designed. It is a pure expression of the king of waterfowl, with a dramatically sloping bill and graceful neck. The unidentified carver interpreted the robust canvasback into this elegant form that most likely was part of a large gunning rig on the Susquehanna. When I look at the decoy, I can imagine it bobbing within a classic spread, startling white on frigid, iron-hued waters. I can see a brace of cans, whiter yet, flashing low through the slanting flakes, crimson eyes seizing the opening in the spread, then tumbling — a left and a right — into that space as the crack from an Ithaca duck gun echoes across the water. The decoy rocks, set into motion from the pellets that raked its side. I'm sure the carver who so expertly fashioned this bird was also a duck hunter. I'm also sure that as he labored into the night, as so many artisans do, he dreamed of the hunt, and of the birds, and that those images guided his hands, elevating his efforts from mere replication to art.



Hanging in the stairway leading to my studio is a large original ink drawing of a bobolink. The bird is perched on a stiff weed stalk that arcs in the wind. The bird is drawn superbly, head tilted, tail tucked low as it seeks balance. It is a masterful drawing, comprised of thousands of hatched and crosshatched pen strokes that expertly describe the feather tracts, the veins in the primaries, the scaly legs. Around and beyond the bird, weeds twist and wave like pennants. Pennsylvanian Ned Smith was among the great nature artists of his time, but his ink drawings are among the finest I have ever seen from any era, and I am familiar with those of many artists. There is an excitement, a tension in these drawings, more dynamic than in his paintings. They have a confidence of one who has experienced nature firsthand and at length. His drawings capture the essence of wildness purely and honestly. I have studied hundreds of his original drawings and their greatest quality is that they convey the racing spark of life — something sorely missing in the overworked, static and saccharine portraits so prevalent in much of wildlife art today.

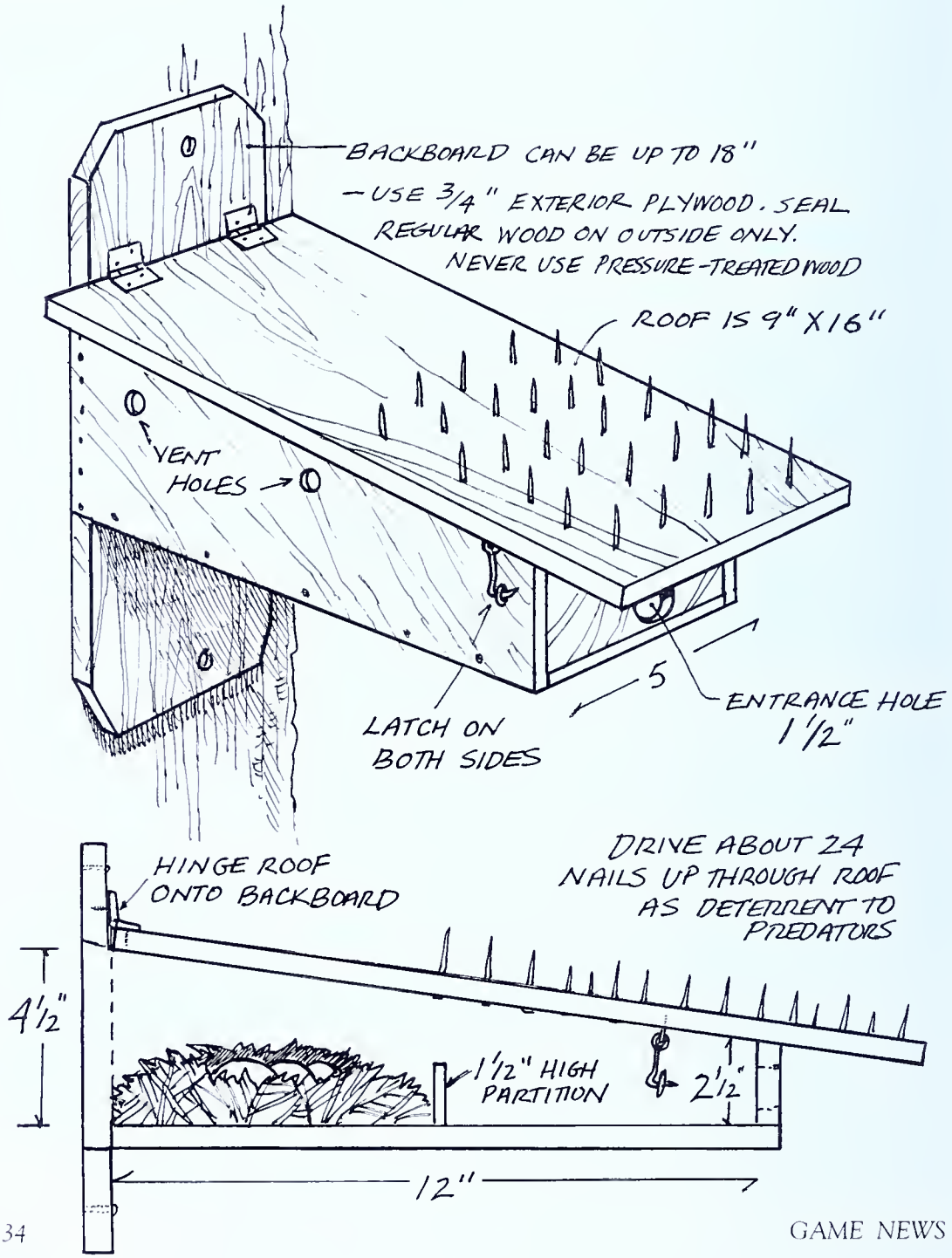


February is the ideal month to try your own hand at making something enduring and useful for wildlife. Following are two plans for birdhouses. Both are unusual, but effective shelters, and even if they don't aspire as works of art, the birds will appreciate your handiwork.



FORT KNOX BLUEBIRD BOX

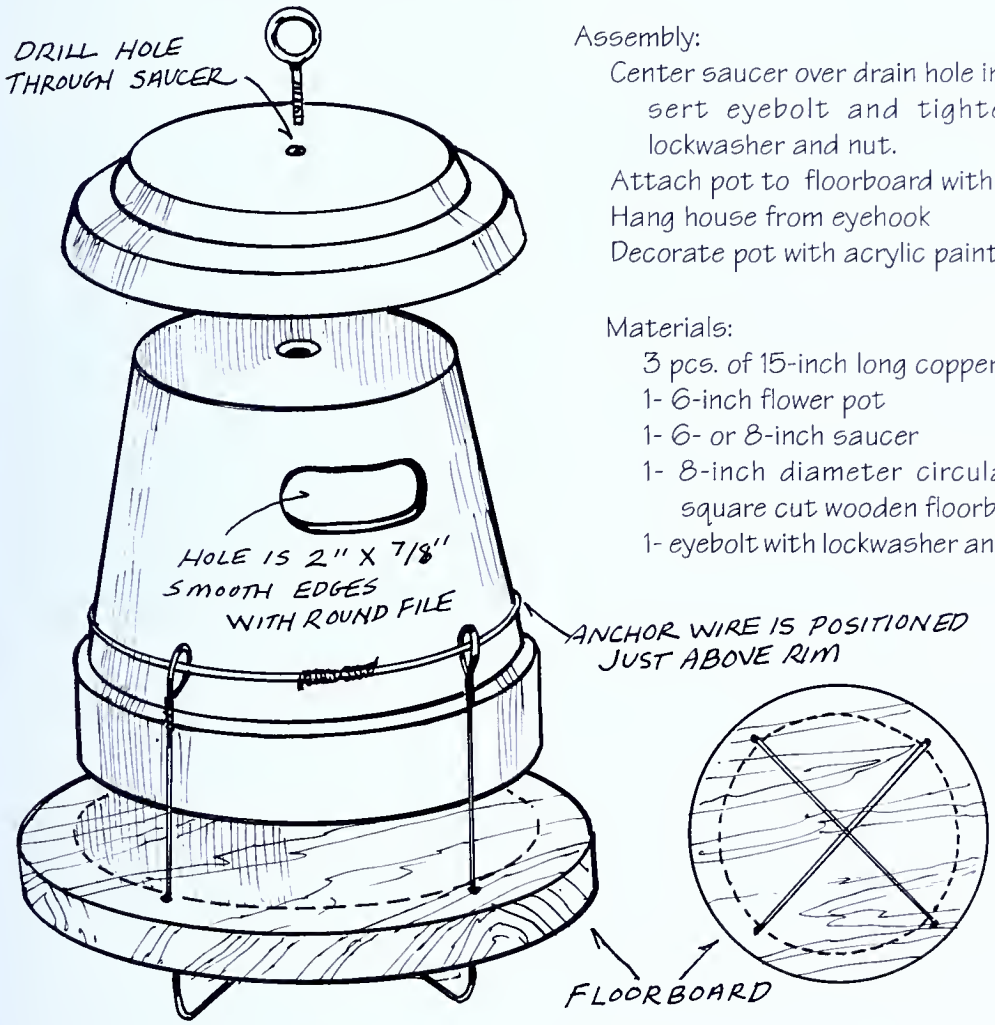
Standard bluebird boxes are often raided by black snakes and squirrels or cats and raccoons that sit on top and fish inside for eggs or nestlings. This design from the 1930s works well if you have predation problems. Not as attractive as regular boxes, they foil predators, something more important to bluebirds than living in a designer home.



FLOWERPOT WREN HOUSE



Birdhouses have been all the rage in recent years. Many non-functional, whimsical types are displayed in homes (not much use to the birds when hung in the kitchen) but it has sparked an interest in birds and bird watching, and that is good. Last summer I was fortunate enough to be present when our resident wren family vacated the birdhouse that hangs just off our deck. I enjoy these feisty birds, even though the incessant chattering of the male drives me to distraction. Here is an easy-to-make wren house that we made as kids. Youngsters will like making these, and the flower pots can be painted easily with acrylic paint for an artistic touch.



Assembly:

Center saucer over drain hole in pot, insert eyebolt and tighten with lockwasher and nut.
Attach pot to floorboard with wires
Hang house from eyehook
Decorate pot with acrylic paints

Materials:

3 pcs. of 15-inch long copper wire
1- 6-inch flower pot
1- 6- or 8-inch saucer
1- 8-inch diameter circular or square cut wooden floorboard
1- eyebolt with lockwasher and nut

Center pot on floorboard. Trace around rim with pencil.
Drill holes for wires just outside of circle. Cross wires under floorboard and pass through diagonally opposite holes. Loop over anchor wire and twist tightly. After nesting season clean by untwisting wires.

FIELD NOTES

Deadeye

MONROE — While trying to trap a nuisance bear that was hanging around our culvert trap where her four cubs had been caught, WCO Randy Shoup did his cub bawl imitation to draw the sow close enough to tranquilize. His cub imitation was a big hit, but I sure wish I could say the same for his marksmenship.

— WCO THOMAS D. SWIECH, REEDERS



Can't Get Away

It took so long to master my computer that I began to think the modern world was passing me by, but when a hunter at Pymatuning called me with a cell phone from a goose blind, I decided I'm really getting old.

— LMO JERRY A. BISH, CONNEAUT LAKE

Good Indication

BERKS — If the first two days of buck season are any indication of how the harvest will end up, then we should have a near record year. My deputies and I checked more bucks on the first two days of the season than we did all of last year, including archery season.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Good Sign

MERCER — On the opening day of small game season I was pleased to see several family groups hunting together. Fathers hunting with young sons and daughters were passing on our hunting heritage. Even more encouraging was that on three separate occasions we saw fathers with their children who weren't quite old enough to hunt, but were along so they could learn about hunting. Whenever we see such interest in our youngsters, we need to do all we can to nurture it

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Mirror, Mirror . . .

BLAIR — This year was an active one for bears here, as we caught and relocated 10 that had been causing problems. I got one call from a lady insisting that a bear was trying to get her, because it had clawed through her sliding door screen. Upon investigation, I discovered that the bear had undoubtedly seen its reflection in her glass door and, thinking it was another bear (during the mating season), ripped the screen off the door. The problem was solved by taping cardboard on the glass to eliminate the reflection.

— WCO SCOTT THOMAS, TYRONE

Seeing is Believing

JUNIATA — My 7-year-old son, Seth, came home from school one day and told me he had seen a bald eagle at the edge of our property along Tuscarora Creek. When he repeated the story the next day I was curious, so I decided to check out his story. Sure enough, there was a bald eagle right where he said it was. The eagle stayed along Tuscarora Creek near McCoysville for a week before moving on.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

A Bit Much

CRAWFORD — A hunter stopped at the Pymatuning visitors center to ask about deer hunting on the game lands. I gave him a map, and then he asked if the Game Commission would be serving breakfast at the building on the opening morning of buck season. We bend over backwards to accommodate hunters, but not that far.

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE

One Bad Deed Leads to Another

BUCKS — Deputy Pfleiger and I had a hearing before a local district justice for an individual who had violated the rules at a PGC rifle range. He had been shooting many more than the allowed three rounds at a time. In order to establish his innocence, he produced one of the signs listing the rules. He had stolen the sign from the range to bring into court.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, RICHLANDTOWN

Long Way From Home

Maryland wildlife biologist Bill Harvey and I were duck hunting in North Dakota when we noticed a leg band on one of the mallards we had bagged. We figured the bird had probably been banded in one of the Canadian provinces to the north, but we were surprised to learn that the duck had been banded at Pymatuning in 1997. The drake probably paired with a hen from the prairies on a wintering area in the southern U.S., then followed her back to her nesting grounds.

— JOHN DUNN, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST, SHIPPENSBURG

Probably the Latter

ERIE — Every junior hunter I checked on the buck season opener said they weren't going to try to take an antlerless deer on either of the Saturdays during the season, but they all said they would be out on the first day of doe season. I don't know if they wanted to be traditional or they just wanted another day off from school.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN



Too Good to be True

TRAINING SCHOOL — When I arrived in Fayette County for field training, WCO Stan Norris advised me that my usual 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. training school schedule would be modified to a 7 to 3 shift. I soon realized that he meant 7 a.m. to 3 a.m.

— TRAINEE MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, HARRISBURG

Productive Year

POTTER — Local bird bander Dave Hauber banded 80 saw-whet owls last year. These tiny owls are extremely secretive, and many people don't know they're around.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

They're not Pets

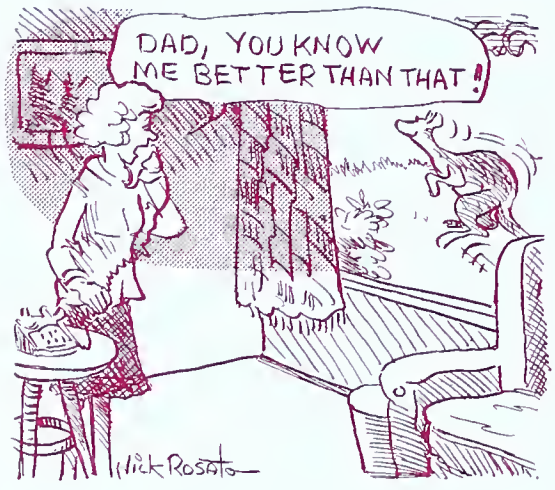
WASHINGTON — A family living in a mobile home here began feeding a raccoon that had taken up residence underneath the home. One morning when the lady of the house was cooking breakfast, the raccoon wandered in and bit and scratched her legs. I was called to dispatch the animal and send it out to be tested for rabies. The raccoon was the biggest one that either Deputy Beth Fife or I had ever seen. It weighed 35 pounds and was 38 inches from nose to tail. Fortunately, the raccoon didn't have rabies, and the woman quickly recovered from her injuries.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Try Hefty Next Time

CRAWFORD — On the opening day of duck season, Deputy Bill Ritts and I were checking hunters in Geneva Marsh when we noticed two guys, wearing not hip boots or waders, but plastic garbage bags over their feet and legs. Although their bags leaked, I had to give them credit for trying.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE



Eye Opener

MCKEAN — With 40 year's service, Deputy Jim Rankin thought he had heard it all, until his daughter, Kate, called to say a 6-foot kangaroo had just crossed her yard, and added that he would be surprised at how far a kangaroo can jump. It seems the animal had escaped from a circus.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Taking the Wheel

TRAINING SCHOOL — While I was on field training assignment a certain Armstrong County WCO insisted on driving, so we wouldn't get stuck on a rough, muddy road. Less than 15 minutes later we were thanking a group of hunters for pulling our vehicle out of the mud. I was trying not to laugh as my FTO warned me about this incident becoming a Field Note. Sorry, it was just too good to pass up.

— TRAINEE WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, HARRISBURG

The Program is Working

The 4th annual Becoming an Outdoors-Woman conference was held at Camp Kresge near White Haven. There were 89 women in attendance, with many of the returning participants exchanging stories of the outdoor adventures they've experienced since learning the necessary skills at BOW programs. One woman told about starting a sporting clays league for women, while another recanted her exciting bear hunt. BOW participant Jane Nocera said she enjoys her *Game News* subscription, but mentioned that she has never seen any Field Notes about the program. I told her that could be fixed.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

That'll Teach 'Em

GREENE — Three reasons to avoid road hunting: 1) If you get a deer, you won't be proud of your effort, or in this case, lack of effort. 2) If you're caught, you'll be fined. 3) If you're really unlucky, you could end up like a couple of excited "roadies" here who saw a buck, jumped out on a hill but forgot to put their truck in park.

— WCO RODNEY BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Keep It Simple

PERRY — While completing a hunting incident report, Trainee Bill Williams and I struggled with determining the proper name for the middle toe. Bill, a former Navy medic, announced that it was "the little piggy that had roast beef." We consulted with my wife, a registered nurse, who said calling it the middle toe would suffice.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE

Will Be Missed

BLAIR — The sportsmen in northern Blair and Antis townships lost a true friend last October when Pete Redenberger — who owned a farm that was enrolled in the PGC's Safety Zone Program for many years, allowing public hunting — passed away.

— DEPUTY THOMAS MCMANN, TYRONE



Overzealous

LYCOMING — When Trainee Victor Rosa said he spotted an orange-clad hunter at the top of a steep hill, we decided to check the hunter, so Victor could gain some experience in doing a routine check. After the long climb, Victor's "hunter" turned out to be an orange "Posted" sign.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, WILLIAMSPORT

Quality

On the first day of buck season I checked 8- 9- and 10- point bucks with wide, thick racks taken on SGL 223 and Farm-Game projects in Greene County. It's obvious to me that our land management practices are working.

— LMO GEORGE MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Modern Technology

BRADFORD — On Trainee Rodney Mee's first day of field training we met WCO Rick Larnerd at District Justice Ayres's office so Rick could show Mee how to fill out a search warrant application. Rick was used to modern equipment, though, and when faced with an electric typewriter, he didn't know how to turn it on. Once the machine was on Rick didn't know how to load the paper, then he had trouble making the carriage line up to where he wanted to print on the document. One thing Mee learned that day was that typewriters have become obsolete.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Not the Only One

Southwest Region dispatcher Gary Rader has fielded his share of unusual calls, and one he received on the second day of bear season was no exception. A caller reported seeing what appeared to be an injured bear that he had been able to approach to within 50 feet. Somerset County WCO Scott Tomlinson asked Gary to call the man back to arrange a meeting near the bear's location. When Gary called back, though, the rather embarrassed man advised him not to worry about sending an officer. He said he had returned to the area with a spotlight to make sure the injured animal was still there, only to discover that the "bear" was a plywood target cutout. To the concerned caller, I offer the following: Don't feel bad, as many WCOs have been momentarily fooled by similar sightings.

— IES MELVIN A. SCHAKE, HOMER CITY

To the Letter

TRAINING SCHOOL — I know that as a trainee we are supposed to "jump" when a field training officer says so, but literally, from the back of a pickup at 30 mph on concrete . . . Geez, Ken.

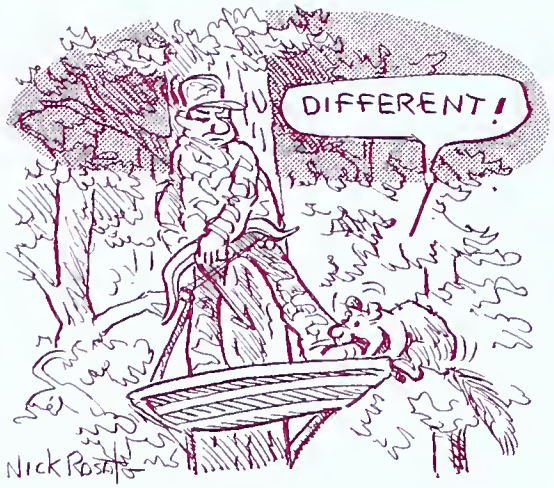
— TRAINEE ERIC SETH, HARRISBURG



You Never Know

MONTGOMERY — I've received many strange calls regarding wildlife, but the call Trainee Eric Seth and I got about a hunter who saw a sloth definitely tops them all.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



Gave 'Em the Boot

Ben Wiand was bowhunting when he noticed a squirrel moving closer and closer to his treestand. He was especially still as the squirrel climbed the stand, and he remained still when it began to chew on his platform. The squirrel then turned its attention to Ben's boot and began to gnaw on the toe. At that point Ben decided it was time to "shake a leg," and when he moved his leg, the squirrel leaped clear off the stand then proceeded to scold him.

— LMO James E, Deniker, Sandy Lake

Enthusiasm Never Wanes

Wyoming — I don't know who holds the honor of being the Keystone State's oldest hunter, but 95-year-old Corey Kiesinger of Mehoopany might just be the man. Mr. Kiesinger said he was getting a new rifle for the new millennium.

— WCO William Wasserman, Tunkhannock

Technical Term

Training School — WCO Bill Bower and I split up to look for an alleged baited deer stand, and after several minutes, Bill radioed me to return after reaching the grassy turn around. I responded by saying, "You mean the herbaceous opening?" Bill's reply was short and sweet. "I don't care what they're calling it now at the training school, just get back here."

— Trainee Gary M. Fujak, Harrisburg

Still Some Good

Bucks — Last fall two hunters turned over to me two shotguns they had found in a game lands parking lot. Two other small game hunters lent another hunter they didn't know a shotgun to use when his malfunctioned, and a landowner let a hunter he didn't know use his phone to call long distance to report an injured deer he'd found. Just when you begin to lose faith in humanity, people restore it.

— WCO Barry A. Leonard, Richlandtown

Unusual

A hunter I checked shot a buck that sported an antler growing down parallel to then turning back up into its muzzle. Had it survived through buck season, I'm sure the antler would have caused serious problems for the deer.

— LMO John C. Shutkufski, Damascus

It's All in a Name

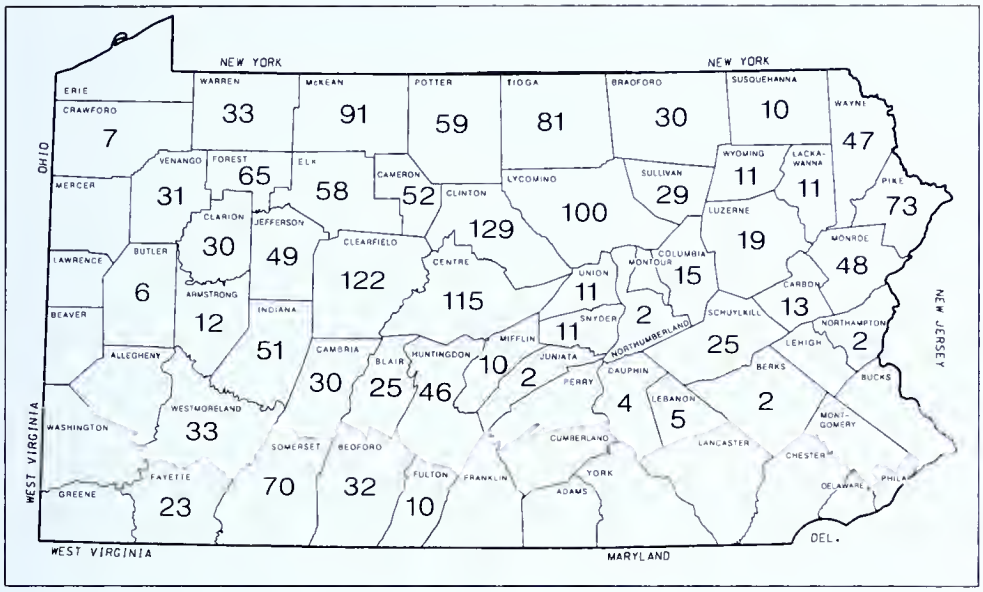
Training School — During deer season my field training officer and I teamed up to be "Fair" and "Hartless" (WCO Roger Hartless). The look on hunters' faces made it seem like it was a bad Game Commission joke.

— Trainee Mark Fair, Harrisburg

Couldn't Have Said it Better

A man here was getting his gear ready in a game lands parking lot when he noticed an individual commit a violation. The man quickly noted the details, then went to a local business where he told his story to a clerk. The man, not knowing whether he had done the right thing, waited while the clerk called Deputy Chuck Worley. Chuck met the gentleman and gathered all of the information and later apprehended the violator. The witness returned to the store later that day to proudly announce that he had bagged a turkey. He mentioned that when you do good things, good things come to you. The reverse is also true I might add.

— WES Richard T. Cramer, Tionesta



Hunters take more than 1,700 bears

THE 1999 bear harvest reached 1,740 (which includes four bears taken illegally). The 1999 harvest is down from 1998's record 2,598, but wildlife managers are nonetheless satisfied with the results of the 3-day season held this past November.

"Fog and unusually warm weather seem to have been leading factors impacting hunter success during the first two days," explained Cal DuBrock, PGC Wildlife Management Bureau director. "The potential was there for a poor harvest, but hunters persevered and had a very respectable harvest. The average annual bear harvest over the past 10 years has been about 1,800."

With a bear kill of 129, Clinton County regained its position as the state's bear harvest leader after a two-year hiatus. Other top harvest counties included Clearfield, 122; Centre, 115; Lycoming, 100; and McKean, 91.

The harvest by region was: Northcentral, 818 (1,192 in 1998); Northeast, 308 (759); Northwest, 221 (198); Southwest, 219 (201); Southcentral, 136 (172); and Southeast, 38 (56).

The Northwest and Southwest regions were the only regions that posted harvest increases from 1998 to 1999.

County harvest statistics for the season, including 1998's actual harvest statistics in parentheses, are:

Northwest — Forest, 65 (52); Jefferson, 49 (38); Warren, 33 (59);

Clarion, 30 (13); Venango, 31 (36); Butler, 6 (4); and Crawford, 7 (2).

Southwest — Somerset, 70 (63); Indiana, 51 (23); Westmoreland, 33 (53); Cambria, 30 (25); Fayette, 23 (20); and Armstrong, 12 (18).

Northcentral — Clinton, 129 (219); Clearfield, 122 (103); Centre, 115 (133); Lycoming, 100 (235); McKean, 91 (115); Tioga, 81 (112); Potter, 59 (89); Elk, 58 (69); Cameron, 52 (78); and Union, 11 (46).

Southcentral — Huntingdon, 46 (65); Bedford, 32 (35); Blair, 25 (34); Snyder, 11 (3); Fulton, 10 (5); Mifflin, 10 (24); and Juniata, 2 (6).

Northeast — Pike, 73 (160); Monroe, 48 (135); Wayne, 47 (104); Bradford, 30 (35); Sullivan, 29 (53); Luzerne, 19 (76); Columbia, 15 (42); Carbon, 13 (70); Lackawanna, 11 (34); Susquehanna, 10 (14); Wyoming, 11 (34); and Northumberland, 2 (5).

Southeast — Schuylkill, 25 (32); Lebanon, 5 (6); Dauphin, 4 (6); Berks, 2 (4); and Northampton, 2 (9).

Hutson named Bureau of Law Enforcement Director

WILLIAM L. HUTSON, director of the Game Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation since 1987, has been named director of the agency's Bureau of Law Enforcement. "All the applicants were high caliber, but after two rounds of interviews, Bill Hutson's name and reputation rose to the top," Executive Director Vern Ross said. "We are fortunate in the Game Commission to be able to say that this was a difficult decision because of the quality of those who applied for the position."



Hutson, a career PGC employee of more than 26 years, replaces James R. Fagan, who retired in July, ending a career spanning more than 34 years of wildlife law enforcement. Hutson, 51, entered the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in March 1972. The native of New Bethlehem, Clarion County, graduated in March 1973, with the 15th Class and reported to Lycoming County as a district wildlife conservation officer. He later served as a WCO in Jefferson County, prior to his promotion to Federal Aid Supervisor in the Northcentral Region in April 1984. He became the agency's training director in 1987.

Fagan, 61, started his Game Commission career as a deputy wildlife conservation officer in his native Huntingdon County. He entered the agency's training school in March 1965 and graduated the following February with the 12th Class. "Dick Fagan was a dedicated and valuable Game Commission employee," Ross said. "He devoted a tremendous amount of energy to making this a better agency and improving its operations."

Fagan was assigned briefly as a

WCO in Dauphin County before reporting to a district in Lehigh County. He became a land manager in 1975. The following year he was promoted to Information & Education Supervisor in the Southeast Region. In 1983, Fagan became director of the agency's Northeast Region, and in 1987 he came to Harrisburg as law enforcement director.

PGC joins Central Pa Conservancy to preserve Miller's Gap

THE GAME Commission has joined with the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and other supporters to protect a 79-acre tract along Blue Mountain. "The Game Commission would never have been able to afford to add this tract to our state game lands system," PGC Executive Director Vern Ross said during a fund raising kickoff ceremony last November. "Without the partnership of the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and the other supporters, it is easy to imagine how this prime piece of real estate could have been lost to development.

"This property, among many other recent commission acquisitions, is an unusual purchase in that it is within sight of four counties and a large, dense human population where open spaces are quickly being lost to development."

At the request of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy purchased this tract at the Witmer estate auction for $175,500. The Game Commission will pay $31,600 — which is the maximum, $400 per acre price the commission may spend — to acquire the property from the conservancy. The conservancy is seeking to raise the remaining funds through tax-deductible donations.

Once the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy raises the necessary funds, the property will be turned over to the Game Commission and will become part of SGL 170, which currently consists of nearly 9,100 acres.



THE ACQUISITION OF the Blue Mountain tract is a tremendous demonstration of how conservationists can team up to work together. Among the financial partners at the ceremony announcing the acquisition were Jerry Zimmerman and Don Heckman, PA Wild Turkey Federation; Thyra Sperry, Keystone Trails Association; Katie Jones, Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club; Kelly Meinhart, Appalachian Audubon Society; Sherry Shatzer, Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust Association; Bob Dunn, Campaign Committee Chair/Mechanicsburg Sportsmen's Assn.; Rick Shatzer, Susquehanna River Waterfowler's Assn.; Jim Papoutsis, Blue Mountain Chapter-SCI; and Carole Witzeman, Chair, Central PA Conservancy.

"The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy was founded to promote the conservation of our natural resources and to participate in developing programs for environmental improvement," said Carol Witzeman, president of the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation group. "The purchase of this property is in keeping with our mission and furthers our commitment to this region."

The property lies on the summit of Blue Mountain and is part of the Kittatinny Ridge. It is a prime hiking area and is considered by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society to be an Important Bird Area critical to migratory and nonmigratory birds.

Several prominent statewide and local conservation and sportsmen's organizations have already showed their support for the project. Safari Club International's Blue Mountain Chapter pledged $5,000; the National Wild Turkey Federation's Pennsylvania Chapter, $4,000; the Keystone Trails Association, $2,000; the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club, $1,500; the Appalachian Audubon Society, $1,000; and the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate, $1,000.

Tax-deductible donations can be made to Central Pennsylvania Conservancy at P.O. Box 587, Harrisburg, PA 17108. ATT: Miller's Gap Project.

The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy is a non-profit organization that is active in preservation and conservation projects in Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry, Juniata, and Huntingdon counties. Earlier last year, the Conservancy purchased and donated to the Game Commission the 669-acre tract known as "Thousand Steps" in Huntingdon County.

Game lands clean-up project, land exchange approved

COMMISSIONERS took action that will lead to the clean up of 140 acres of state game lands and add more than 750 acres to the state game lands system. Under the project, the North Cambria Fuel Company will lease 140 acres of SGL 273 in Indiana County to extract coal from the parcel. At the end of the mining operation, North Cambria Fuel will reclaim and revegetate the area. The reclamation/revegetation project will greatly reduce the acid mine drainage currently being discharged into the surrounding water table and Yellow Creek.

In exchange for the mining lease, the Game Commission will receive from North Cambria Fuel a royalty on the coal taken from the game lands, and 300 acres in Brush Valley and Center townships, Indiana County. This land will be added to SGL 276, which currently consists of nearly 4,000 acres.

In addition, North Cambria Fuel will share the costs of purchasing for

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

the Game Commission 426 acres in Cambria County, which will become part of SGL 108. SGL 108 currently contains 22,727 acres.

This lease is the result of a re-mining initiative involving the Game Commission, Blacklick Watershed Association, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Department of Environmental Protection. It also is in direct support of Gov. Tom Ridge's re-mining initiative programs to improve the environment.

"This is the type of project where everyone wins," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Pennsylvanians will benefit because we are preserving additional acres of land for public hunting and outdoor recreation. The local communities, both human and wildlife, will benefit from the reclamation and revegetation projects that will help reduce acid mine drainage. And North Cambria Fuel and its employees will benefit from the coal lease.

"The cooperation between the state and local agencies involved in making this project a reality can serve as a model for other projects being considered under Gov. Ridge's re-mining initiative. I am pleased that the Game Commission played an important role in this project."

Elk hunt advisory committee created

PGC Executive Director Vern Ross has created an advisory committee to develop a plan to establish a limited elk hunt. The panel is scheduled to present its recommendations by March.

"Our elk management program is one of Pennsylvania's greatest wildlife success stories," Ross said. "From a herd of fewer than 40 in the early 1970s, our elk population now stands at more than 550. Control of the herd is important as the population continues to expand. The population is expected to reach 1,054 by 2005, and we must begin to lay the groundwork for a logical plan to manage the herd through a limited hunt.

"That is why I've asked a 12-member advisory committee representing various interests to begin to examine what we need to do in advance, so we

New, Toll-Free Region Office Phone Numbers

Per the unanimous vote of the commissioners at their August meeting, the Game Commission has re-established toll-free telephone numbers to the region offices. This action was based on a recommendation in the MAT report to improve the commission's public service. The following toll-free numbers are now in operation:

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

are ready when the time comes."

Rawley Cogan, commission elk biologist and committee chairman, said the group has met several times, and has been discussing various biological, sociological and legal issues related to hunting elk in Pennsylvania.

"Since 1980, when the Game Commission began studying elk, we have gained considerable knowledge about how we must effectively and efficiently manage this herd," Cogan said. "The Game Commission and Elk Hunt Advisory Committee members recognize the unique and valuable resource elk represent in Pennsylvania. Through limited hunting opportunities we plan to control this population to curtail conflicts with human populations and to ensure the long-term success of the animals."

Cogan noted that committee members recognize that it would take a change in state law to add an elk license and fee structure to enable a limited hunt to occur in the state.

With the herd confined to the traditional range of Elk and Cameron counties and portions of Clearfield and Clinton counties, the commission unveiled an elk management program in 1996. The plan called for a 3-year trap and transfer effort to move 90 elk from the traditional elk range, with the goal of establishing an elk population that could sustain limited hunting opportunities.

Since 1997, two trap and transfer sites have been completed; a third is scheduled for 2000 on SGL 321 in Clinton County. The commission purchased this property in October from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy.

In addition to Cogan, Elk Hunt Advisory Committee members are: George Miller, sportsman and former Game Commissioner; Jim Eckert, representative of the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee; Robb Miller, representative of the House Game and Fisheries Committee; John Sidelinger, Elk State Forest assistant district forester, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Dave Messics, regional director, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Andy Sorg, sportsman; Marshall Wolfe, Elk County farmer; John Prushnok, corporate landowner, P&N Coal Company; Bill Shultz, legislative liaison, Game Commission; Dan Marks, Information and Education supervisor, Game Commission Northcentral Region Office; and Debbie Bowman, tourism development director, Department of Community and Economic Development.

In the area of Clinton County where elk have been released as part of the trap-and-transfer project, a farmer has killed nine elk for crop damage. While this is frustrating to all those who are excited about the prospect of having elk established in the area, the individual is, under current state law, allowed to do what he has done. The law stipulates that anyone who is qualified to kill wildlife, including elk, for crop damage must report that action to the Game Commission within 24 hours, so that the meat may be saved and distributed to needy families. So far, this individual has complied with that stipulation.

Anxious to find a more reasonable solution, the Game Commission has reached an understanding with this person. In exchange for his agreeing to not shoot any more elk, the Game Commission will attempt to remove elk that come within a one-mile radius of his property and along a 3-mile corridor of Route 120 on either side of his property. The captured elk will be relocated to the new state game lands (SGL 321) in West Keating Township, Clinton County.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer
A chasing the wild deer and following the roe
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.
— Robert Burns

The Myth of the Deer

WHITE-TAILED DEER have been around for a long, long time. They are members of the family Cervidae, a biological classification that groups them with mammals that range from the dog-size South American pudu to the lumbering North American moose, which all developed from ancient even-toed animals scientists have named the Artiodactyls. Whitetails, as a species, are thought to have developed in the geologic epochs called Miocene and Pliocene, 20 to 10 million years ago, in North America.

Mankind, by contrast, is a newcomer on Earth. Deer undoubtedly did just fine, or at least sufficiently, before we arrived to become just another predator that would like to have them for dinner. But we and the deer are here together now, and things must be very changed from the old, old days.

How different life is for deer with humans around is another story. Certainly we've affected them, how and where they live, their health, their numbers and the way their lives play out. But go to the flip side, and deer have had at least as great an effect on us, especially we hunters.



Bob Steiner

DEER HAVE BECOME a fixture in our singular and collective psyches here in Pennsylvania. The deer in our mind, heart and soul is a myth.

Deer haven't changed us in the physical sense, not unless giving up smoking and exercising so we can walk farther while

hunting counts. Instead, deer have become a fixture in our singular and collective psyches here in Pennsylvania. Some of our perceptions about deer are true, but to a large extent, I believe, the deer in our mind, heart and soul is a myth.

Deer are just average-size mammals that are easy to kill. I mean kill in the sense of its cessation of life, when the animal's blood stops flowing, the muscles stop working and the brain dies — not the process of the hunt that leads to the kill. Hunting can be hard, as in difficult and extraordinarily challenging. But hit by a well-placed, mushrooming bullet or a razor-sharp broadhead, and a deer is seen as flesh and bone — its vital processes end and it dies.



WE OFTEN HEAR tales of monster deer that no one knew existed, but that emerged to be shot during the season, like this 9-point buck with a nearly 18-inch spread taken in Luzerne County by Annie Benson of Mountaintop during the second week of the 1998 season.

When the hunt is over and the hunter reaches the deer he has killed, he finds simply a dead animal, that is all. What was once living and vibrant is no more, merely meat in the making, just antlers and hide. I believe this is why it is not uncommon for a hunter to feel a letdown, a sense of sadness and even regret, mixed with happiness at having shot a deer. What had been imbued with meaning, even extending to fantasy, is now shown to be exceedingly mortal.

Make no mistake, we are the ones who have made deer the stuff of myth. The animal has always been *Odocoileus virginianus*, named humbly for the fossil of a hollow deer tooth found by an early 19th century naturalist, in a cave in Virginia. Deer have always been just themselves, busy with the basics of existence — to eat, sleep, keep well and reproduce.

But what have we made of the deer? Here in Pennsylvania we so much regard the white-tailed deer that we have made it our state animal, a living symbol, sometimes more symbol than life.

To us deer hunters, the whitetail has grown large in our mind and our heart, until it has become so much more than an animal that must lie down on the hard ground to chew its cud, that shivers through a winter night and flicks away the flies on a summer day, that doesn't even smell real good.

In the hunter's myth of the deer, the animal becomes the embodiment of the wildness and the beauty of the place it lives, so welcoming different from the four suburban walls and macadamed drives that are now our "un-natural" habitat. Our idea of the deer takes us back to a time when, perhaps, we could have lived like it does, among natural trees and rocks and streams, on and with the earth itself, and nothing artificial added. We hunters hardly ever articulate it, but the effort to take a deer is partly a pursuit of recapturing a bit of wildness-lost for ourselves.

Right now, as I write this, we're at the end of the second week of the 1999 buck season and firmly in the grasp of the myth of the deer. For those of us who have not yet gotten "our deer" this year, the to-do about whitetails and whitetail hunting has reached a high pitch. I'll even dare to say that among December's hubbub, the most important holiday around here is deer season, more so than Christmas or even the millennial New Year.

Each evening, we get phone calls from hunting friends who are still after deer and from those who have "tagged out," but remain interested in our hunting progress. Conversations are currently about hardly

anything but deer. We hear tales of monster deer that no one knew existed, but that emerged to be shot opening day or first Saturday. Word of their taking is already spreading into the stuff of glory.

During the day, in the actual deer woods, whitetails seem truly to be fantasy and scarce to find. But on the way home a buck and five does cross the road in our headlights, like something that returned to earth supernaturally with the sunset. We certainly couldn't find them during hunting hours. The intelligence and instinctive capabilities of deer reach mythic proportions as they avoid our best hunting efforts. We flatter ourselves that we really are skillful hunters, and it's just that the deer are so "smart" that we can't get them.

Deer aren't smart. Their secret to avoiding our bullets and arrows is more their innate wariness, their natural camouflage and stealthy actions, and how quickly they can escape.

But deer aren't smart. When we get a chance to watch wild deer, we notice their simple animal actions and capacities. They sniff the air, they swivel their ears, they look and listen and lick wet noses. Their secret to avoiding our bullets and arrows is more their innate wariness, their natural camouflage and stealthy actions, and how quickly they can run into a thicket when they have to. They don't reason out their next action. Their intelligence is nonhuman, but instead of diminishing them in our eyes, that adds to our awe.

Not everyone agrees with the myth of the deer. To some, the "long-legged rabbit" or "hoofed rat" is something that eats too many beans and too much corn, mows down the tulips and arbor vitae, and runs out in front of the car. Here in Pennsylvania, we are currently experiencing great disparity of opinion over what deer are and how we should live with them. The controversy could be distilled as myth vs. reality — the whitetail as an embodiment of the outdoors experience and the preciousness of a disappearing nature, compared with the bald truth that if too many of these animals are in one place, they eat a damaging amount. Personal interpretations of the myth and the reality of deer may be responsible for the myriad of impassioned opinions on whether there are too many or not enough whitetails.

As for the hunter's deer of myth, that big-racked ideal has spawned an entire industry, including keeping us outdoor writers in paychecks, as well as supporting hunting magazines and books, videos and equipment, artwork and calendars, and more. Some of this commercialism promotes the myth for self-perpetuation and increasing its own profit making, one fantasy feeding another.

But mostly the current to-do about deer just echoes what's in the hearts of many of us. Both the deer of imagination and the deer of mortal flesh and blood are fascinating. So much so that we may even define ourselves by the deer, use it to determine our self-worth, and make our dearest wish being known to the world at large as a good deer hunter.

We have even turned occasionally to poetry, like Robert Burns, to express how intertwined our happiness is with deer. For many of us, wherever we are, no matter what we're doing, some part of our heart is always in the high (and the low) lands, "a-hunting the deer." And that makes our lives all the sweeter. □

Behind the Badge

By Joseph G. Wenzel
WES, Northeast Region

There must be a beginning of any great matter, but the continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory. — Francis Drake, 17 May 1587

Many are Called, Few are Chosen

JUNE 7, 1998, was a balmy overcast day in Harrisburg, but when I left my home in the Poconos that morning, it was sunny and much cooler. I said my good-byes to my family and left for the Game Commission's headquarters in Harrisburg. The Game Commission training school, formally known as the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, is located there. This was a special day for me and for the 17 new recruits making up the 24th Class. This would be the day they would embark on careers as wildlife conservation officers, and I was taking a break from my duties as a district wildlife conservation officer to act as a resident instructor.

I had already spent part of the week before at the training school, cleaning and waxing the classroom desks, preparing the desk pads and nametags, and measuring and centering everything to perfection. Afterall, the trainees would be required to emulate their supervisors and would soon undertake a very structured schedule, with neatness and organization being important factors. As a resident instructor, I worked under the supervision of William Hutson, the commission's training director, and James Kazakavage, training school supervisor. I would also be working closely with Rich Palmer, training supervisor, and Patty Jerome, clerical supervisor.

As instructed, trainees arrived between 1500 and 1700 hours (military time would become a permanent part of their new career.) One by one the trainees arrived, many accompanied by their families. I could see the anticipation on their faces as they stepped toward the doorway marked "Trainee Entrance." The trainees entered the school dining facility, where they were checked in and given



24TH CLASS of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation on the pistol range.

room assignments and initial orders. Rich Palmer and I alternated escorting each trainee to his or her new quarters, what they would call home for the next nine months. The trainees were instructed to go to dinner with their families, then return to the school at 1900 hours for their first formal gathering as a class.

Upon arriving back at the facility, trainees said their good-byes to their families in anticipation of seeing them on the following weekend. Trainees are given most weekends off, unless training schedules dictate otherwise, but the weekends are short, as they must return Sunday evening for weigh-in and roll call.

After assembling in the classroom, the trainees were addressed by Director Hutson. He explained that much would be expected of each trainee in all areas, including academic performance, and that the staff and instructors would continually evaluate them. The trainees were given a handbook outlining the many rules and regulations, then they were given final instruction by supervisor Kazakavage. We then went to the dormitory area of the training wing for proper military style bed making technique, and by 2200 hours it was lights out. Morning came quickly, as the trainees were up by 0500 hours. Each day at the school begins with physical exercise and a brisk run, then back to quarters for a shower and cleanup. Breakfast is served by an outside contractor, and is ready in the dining hall at 0700. Morning classes begin at 0800 sharp.

I'm often asked how a person gets a job as a conservation officer. Most people are surprised when they learn that the commission's complement of full-time wildlife conservation officers is only about 135. When the complement falls much below, agency budgets are prepared to enable the agency to move forward with recruiting a new training class. The Civil Service Commission advertises an announcement to prepare for the recruitment and testing process.

The process begins with candidates making written application to take a written test, offered at various sites across the state. The number varies, but up to 5,000 people have taken the test for some classes. Those who are successful with the written exam move on to an oral exam, usually administered in Harrisburg and in Pittsburgh. The next step is narrowing the applicants down to approximately 50 to 60 candidates trying for a position in a class of 20 to 30. Commission officers and regional supervisors perform extensive background checks. Those applicants who are still eligible are invited for interviews held at the agency's Harrisburg headquarters. The interview board generally consists of about eight members made up of commission bureau and regional directors.

This interview stage narrows down the applicants to those who will be offered appointments to the next class, but there is another step to complete. An extensive and rigorous physical examination, including a stress test and swimming exam, is administered by an outside contractor, sometimes Penn State University, to determine if each applicant is capable of performing the expected duties of a conservation officer. Final appointments are offered, and a hasty acceptance is expected, as the successful applicants normally have less than a month from being notified of their acceptance until they have to report. The entire selection process, from time of application to the completion of the physical exam takes nearly 10 months.

While at the academy, the trainee's daily assignments, including cleaning details in the training wing, are inspected daily, usually by the resident instructor.

The trainees are expected to work together as a team, and each week they are assigned leadership roles to help prepare them for management duties when in the field. Generally, training begins each day in the classroom, but the class does go to outside training facilities for training. The 24th Class, for example, traveled to

Shippensburg University, Harrisburg Area Community College and the Pennsylvania State Police crime laboratory, just to name a few. Dendrology and bird identification classes were held at various state game lands around Harrisburg, as was firearms training.

The Game Commission has a proud tradition in our training program, which exceeds most other state and municipal law enforcement training programs, not only in academic requirements, but also in length of training. Structured academics and discipline are emphasized. Classes include subjects such as Pennsylvania history and geography, Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure, and many law enforcement subjects related to wildlife management and land management practices. Classes in public speaking and conservation education programs are also stressed. An extensive dendrology class is required, as is wildlife forensics and evidence collection techniques, and a rigorous defensive tactics and firearms training program must be successfully completed. High performance standards must be maintained.

Approximately three months into their training, trainees go on a land management assignment. This provides them with hands-on experience while working with a land management officer, and they get to see firsthand how land management techniques benefit wildlife and people. From day one, trainees realize how all agency personnel, regardless of their assigned bureaus or duties, are working in a concerted effort to benefit Pennsylvania's wildlife resources and to serve all Pennsylvanians.

Prior to the fall hunting seasons, trainees are commissioned as deputy wildlife conservation officers. Each is assigned to as many as four WCOs in a 10-week period during the fall. These WCOs serve as field training officers (FTOs) and are trained to evaluate the student officers. In the field, trainees get to apply the information they have learned, and gain valuable experience from these veteran officers. They also get a firsthand look at how this career affects families and lifestyles, for it is truly a unique career. The field training assignments also give trainees a chance to feel a little more at ease "in the real world," a figure of speech the class soon came to recognize from my daily pep talks, and also gave them a peek at the "light at the end of the tunnel."

Not all trainees make it through the training process. Some realize that they may not be adaptable to this career or the many demands expected of them by the agency, and more importantly — the public. Others face family hardships.

Following a short Christmas holiday leave, the trainees return to Harrisburg for the "home stretch." My tour of duty as resident instructor concluded at this point, and my good friend and former classmate WCO Tom Grohol volunteered to complete the final three months of training. This training period in the dead of winter goes by slowly. Because of cold and inclement weather, most of the final training is in the classroom. Final exams in all subjects took place, and finally graduation day, March 13, 1999, arrived. It was a proud day for me and agency staff, but more importantly, for the trainees and their families. The class had reached their goals and dreams. Speakers at the graduation reminded those in attendance that the Game Commission is about people — a lot of dedicated men and women working toward common goals.

Just a few weeks prior to graduation the trainees were given their district assignments, and like their predecessors, most new officers would be heading for new territory and moving families to unfamiliar places.

This is just a brief sketch of the training school, to enlighten those who may be interested in our conservation officer training program, and to describe in a nutshell the dedication of our men and women behind the badge. One thing is for sure: Many are called, but few are chosen. □

There's no better cure for cabin fever than a trip to this birdwatcher's paradise.

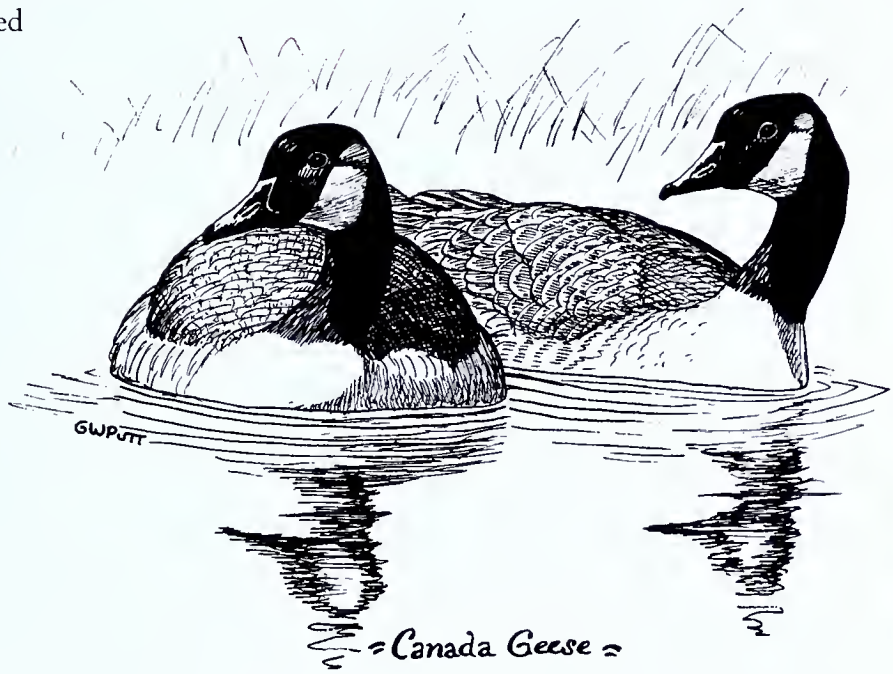
Middle Creek Midwinter

TWO MILES from the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area the sky suddenly filled up with skeins of greater snow geese. It was mid-February, just after a rainstorm, and my husband Bruce, my father and I had come to see the amazing spectacle of greater snow geese (*Anser caerulescens atlantica*) on SGL 46 in Lancaster and Lebanon counties.

This was my fifth visit to Middle Creek over the last 15 years. Each one has been special; each time I have seen abundant and varied species of waterfowl. But never before had I seen thousands of birds at one time sweep across the skies or congregate in open fields, seemingly turning the brown soil white with their forms.

Over the last few years I've been reading about the upsurge of greater snow geese, and their adoption of Middle Creek as a staging area along the Atlantic flyway in midwinter. A rare sight at the beginning of the '90s, their population began increasing in 1992. In 1997, an unprecedented 150,000 arrived. Since then, the greater snow geese at Middle Creek have hovered around 60,000, but thousands more are scattered throughout farm fields in Berks, Chester and Lancaster counties.

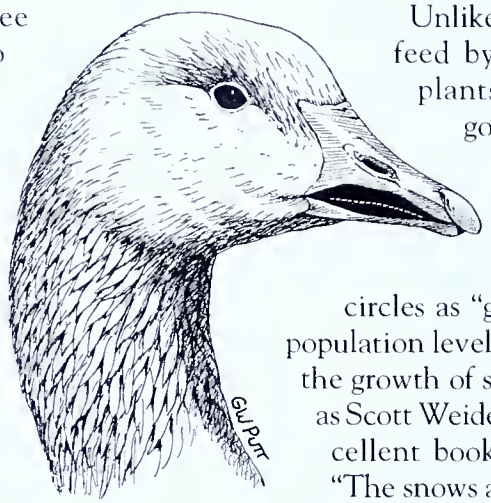
Back in the 1970s, shortly after the dam-



ming of Middle Creek, visitors came to see resident Canada geese, which increased rapidly after 30 mated pairs were transplanted from the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area in 1967. Today, according to John Dunn, Game Commission biologist and our host for the morning, Middle Creek now has 3,000 resident Canada geese and five to six thousand migrants.

Then, 20 years ago, tundra swans started appearing at the facility. Today, visitors can expect to see 4,000 of them in mid- to late February, although in that stupendous year 1997, the number of swans doubled.

All of these species have benefited from the leftover grain in farmers' fields, which helps sustain them during the winter months. But while the eastern North America wintering population of tundra swans remains sustainable at about 90,000, the greater snow goose population is growing at nine percent a year. Already they are degrading portions of their winter habitat in salt marshes from New Jersey to North Carolina, and biologists fear they will soon overwhelm their Arctic summering habitat, too.



~Snow Goose~

This is not a guess on the biologists' part. They have already seen this happen to the Arctic habitat of the mid-continent population of lesser snow geese (*Anser caerulescens*) and Ross's geese (*Anser rossii*). Their numbers have tripled since the 1960s to six million, again, in part, because of ample fields of grain on their wintering grounds. Thirty-five percent of their Arctic nesting habitat along west Hudson Bay and James Bay has been destroyed, another 30 percent has been badly damaged, and the rest is overgrazed.

This same habitat is also home to more than 30 other migratory bird species, such as semi-palmated sandpipers, red-necked phalaropes, dowitchers, Hudsonian godwits, whimbrels, stilt sandpipers, yellow rails, American wigeons, northern shovelers, oldsquaws, red-breasted mergansers, parasitic jaegers, Lapland longspurs, and the southern James Bay population of Canada geese. All of their populations are declining because of habitat destruction by these so-called "light geese."

Unlike Canada geese, which feed by eating the tops of plants, light geese (Ross' goose, greater and lesser snow geese) pull up and eat the roots of plants, a process known in scientific circles as "grubbing." At normal population levels, this helps stimulate the growth of salt marsh plants, but, as Scott Weidensaul writes in his excellent book *Living on the Wind*, "The snows are literally eating the heart out of the salt marsh." Biologists call these decimated areas "eatouts," in which smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*), the favorite food of greater snow geese, is replaced with empty mudflats.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as the greater snow goose population expanded, hundreds of acres of salt marshes at Prime Hook and Bombay Hook national wildlife refuges in Delaware, and Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey were turned into mudflats. But on freshwater impoundments at Prime Hook, for instance, grubbing by the geese helped to open up areas of thick cordgrass vegetation to a greater diversity of annual plants preferred by other waterfowl. Then, too, in salt marshes close to agricultural areas, the geese shifted their daytime feeding activity to green grain fields of winter wheat, barley and rye, and harvested corn and soybean stubble fields. This has led to the stabilization and even

repair of previously degraded areas. On the other hand, the damage is increasing at Forsythe NWR, because there are no agricultural lands close to it.

Agricultural fields also sustain the greater snow geese at Middle Creek and its environs, but wildlife managers want to keep their population low enough so that they will not ruin their nesting grounds as the overpopulation of lesser snow geese and Ross's geese have done.

Greater snow geese nest in the high eastern Arctic, including the coast of Greenland, Ellesmere, Bylot and northern Baffin Islands, and approximately 800,000 greater snow geese are now descending on fall staging areas first at Ungava Bay, directly south of Baffin Island, and then in Quebec along the St. Lawrence River. In Quebec they have switched their primary feeding grounds from bulrush marshes to corn and winter wheat fields, causing so much damage that, according to Dunn, the Canadian government has been paying farmers for crop damage. He thinks that the habitat can support about one million greater snow geese at most, a number he estimates they will reach by 2002. "Maybe," Dunn said, "we still have a chance to control them if we do something now."

That is why the Game Commission organized an all-day workshop on snow geese last January at Middle Creek, where Dunn and other speakers encouraged increased hunting of them. Hunting snow geese, it turns out, is not easy because they are wary birds that stay in huge flocks for protection, a fact we discovered when Dunn drove us out to the Middle Creek farm fields which, near midday, were packed with snow geese. As soon as we stopped and got out for a closer look, the geese moved away from us and some took off, wheeling in huge flocks over the fields. Luckily, our binoculars allowed us close-up views of the 6- to 7- pound white birds with black wingtips. Here and there among the predominant greater snow geese, we picked out an occasional blue goose color phase of the lesser snow goose. There are now so many of the latter, they are spilling over into the Atlantic Flyway, Dunn told us. He also sometimes sees Ross's geese at Middle Creek.

To people used to the songbird-filled mountains of central Pennsylvania, the sheer numbers of snow geese were overwhelming, and we stood watching and listening to the spectacle of thousands of them taking off, landing, foraging and calling, their loud *whock, whocks* resonating over the landscape. Shivering in the cold wind, I could imagine I was in the high Arctic in summer instead of a Pennsylvania farm field in midwinter.

Once we had our fill of snow geese in the fields, we visited other areas of Middle Creek, most notably Willow Point Trail. This easy, almost flat, half-mile trail leads to an observation point that overlooks much of the 400-acre, shallow water lake. Interspersed with nesting islands, the lake was created to provide resting, loafing, nesting and feeding areas for resident and migratory waterfowl. Even there the sky and a portion of the lake was white with snow geese, and our ears rang from the combined honks and calls of Canada geese, snow geese and tundra swans.

With the help of visitors Bill and Amy Francisco and their powerful scope, we had excellent views of a pair of ruddy ducks, common mergansers and ring-necked ducks. Dad, who at the age of 85, was getting his first real taste of waterfowl watching in Pennsylvania through a scope, was even more excited when we spotted a pair of mature bald eagles in dead snags on the other side of the lake near the White Oak Picnic Area. Dunn had told us earlier that they had built a nest at Middle Creek but hadn't used it in the two years they had been there. Recently, though, he had watched them mating, raising hopes that they might finally produce young at Middle Creek.

Probably the easiest way to watch waterfowl at Middle Creek is from the berm

of the road below the visitors center. As the day gradually brightened, more and more visitors drove in for a look. No one was disappointed, as we watched an endless parade of swimming Canada geese, tundra swans, northern shovelers and black ducks close to the shore. On a small pond across the road from the lake we spotted ruddy ducks and a pair of buffleheads. All of these birds were easily identified through our binoculars.

We never seem to have enough time to do everything we want to at Middle Creek and, as the short winter day waned, we reluctantly took a final drive to the White Oak Picnic Area, directly across the lake from Willow Point Trail. To our chagrin, we again spotted a bald eagle. This time it was perched on a dead snag in the water near Willow Point. We studied it through our binoculars for a long time, willing it to come closer. Finally, we climbed back into our car for the long trip home.

Then, suddenly, as if in answer to our wishes, it flew across the lake toward us. Swooping low over our car, it made two passes at a pigeon but missed. We were open-mouthed with surprise. In that instant, the spectacle of thousands of snow geese was permanently upstaged in our memories of Middle Creek by the hunting bald eagle.

Later, when we told others of our fabulous midwinter visit to Middle Creek, we raved about the huge flocks of geese and swans, mentioned the surprising diversity of ducks, but ended with our tale of the bald eagle's near miss. As usual, where nature is concerned, it was the unexpected that capped a perfect day. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

A Bird's Alphabet

Fill in the names of the birds using the clues at the right.

A _____ _____ is called "wild canary."
B _____ _____ is a close relative to the crow.
_____ C_____ Its window reflection causes a combative response.
D _____ _____ marks its territory by drumming.
E _____ _____ is an abundant imported species that has turned into a pest.
_____ F_____ is a common bird with a tint of red coloring.
G _____-_____ _____ is a nocturnal bird of prey.
H _____ _____ can be seen walking or running through fields, but never hopping.
I _____ _____ is called "blue canary."
_____-_____ J_____ is called "snowbird."

Which bird is not a winter resident in PA? _____ _____

answers on p. 64

By John Kasun

Many archery enthusiasts full cycle: They start out with traditional equipment, progress into a compound bow with all the modern gadgets then go back to traditional equipment. Now, many who started out with compound bows decide to . . .

Return to the Past

WHEN THE compound bow entered the archery scene, interest in bowhunting exploded. The highly efficient compound, with its forgivable let-off, brought thousands of new shooters to the sport of archery. Interest in conventional bows fell through the floorboards. It seemed archery would be changed forever, and the only use for bows other than compounds would be for tomato stakes.



GEORGE STOUT of Manns Choice stepped into the past when he took this buck with his traditional archery equipment.

But the death of traditional archery is similar to the wrongly reported death of Mark Twain. "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated," said Twain.

While most archers switched to the compound and the associated high-tech gear, a small number never made the change. They were a minority, but they became the embers from which the future flames of interest in traditional archery would grow. But the converts to traditional equipment came from two distinctly different groups of archers.

First were those who had used traditional equipment but had switched to the compound, and second, those whose first bow was a compound and who had never shot a traditional bow.

A member of the first group is George Stout of Manns Choice. George was an active bowhunter when the compound came on the scene. The compound bug stung George, like many of us. He became

so involved that he and a partner opened an archery shop. The compound led to the development of other high-tech archery gear. George soon found that the equipment was replacing what he liked most about archery. During a visit with George and his wife, Carol, we discussed George's return to traditional archery. "I guess you could say I was shooting more and enjoying it less," George said. "The bowhunting success rate climbed from two percent in the mid-'60s to 20 percent in the '90s. The surge of high-tech gear has made us better killers, but I didn't feel we were better hunters. Everyone wanted to shoot well with less effort. Archery was never meant to be quick and easy, it was meant to be an experience. For me, something was missing. The challenge was gone and, more important, archery wasn't fun anymore. I decided to return to the old ways, to a simpler form of archery, to experience the thrill of watching an arrow sail through the evening light to a mark on a far hillside."

Continuing to talk about his love of archery, George produced two straight bows and a back-quiver full of arrows from a nearby closet. George introduced the bows as if they were members of his family. "This is 'Old Buck'," he said as he gently laid a 52-pound-pull lemonwood bow on the table. "It was built in the late '40s I figure," George said. "Shot it through a chronograph and it sends an arrow a blistering 135 feet per second," he laughed. "This one is the 'Maple Monster'. I made it myself."

As I lifted the bow, its wound leather grip curled neatly into the palm of my hand like a hound dog in front of a fire. Instead of the cold mechanical feel of a modern day bow, it felt almost alive. The bow was smooth and I could feel the energy build as I reached my anchor. There was no let-off, only raw power waiting to cast an arrow over a far horizon. As I drew the bow, my mind flashed back to a day more than 45 years ago when as a young man, arms trembling, I drew back my first hunting bow.

As I slowly relaxed the bow, George slipped a leather quiver full of arrows over his shoulder. If George had a mustache and didn't wear glasses, he could easily have been mistaken for Errol Flynn out of a Robin Hood movie. "Here is a man's arrow," George said as he slid one out of the quiver like archers had done for hundreds of years before. The arrow was made of Port Orford cedar, fletched with huge turkey feathers and tipped with a 160-grain Howard Hill broadhead. Compared to today's thin carbon arrows it looked like a telephone pole with feathers. "I used one just like it to take that buck in the picture," he said motioning toward a photograph on the wall. "I was hunting from the ground when that buck approached within 10 yards. Another buck behind him distracted him, and when he turned to look back he was broadside with his head be-



TRADITIONAL ARCHER draws down on a moving target at the Forksville Bowhunters Festival.

hind a tree. Slowly he put his leg forward, giving me the shot of a lifetime. I shot and he went about 80 yards and was down. Taking that buck at close range with a traditional bow was a thrill of a lifetime."

George's love of archery was obvious. But what also became obvious was that he was not alone. Tom Wood, owner of Archers and Anglers in Everett, offers a variety of sporting goods for the outdoorsman. While the major part of Tom's business is modern archery equipment, he also has an excellent selection of traditional equipment.

"I stock traditional bows between $175 and $700. Special order bows can cost upwards of $1,200. My traditional archery customer is already a bowhunter, he's just looking for ways to make it more challenging," Tom said. Many of Tom's customers are from the second group mentioned — bowhunters who started with a compound. "Most of these shooters have never experienced the thrill of shooting traditional equipment. The one thing they discover is that it makes shooting fun again. Most archers love to tinker, and traditional archery allows them to make much of their own equipment. We have people who make leather quivers and arm guards, others who fletch and crest custom arrows." Pointing to a display of crested arrows hanging over the counter Tom asked, "When was the last time you saw workmanship like this? We also have several people in the area who have built some excellent bows. The modern high-tech equipment is fine. But the equipment is just so much hardware. Traditional archers have a genuine relationship with their equipment and the sport of archery."

Although many traditional equipment manufacturers offer new equipment, garage sales and flea markets are a good source of used original equipment. Bows found at these sales can normally be purchased from $25 to $50 and offer a great way to get started. If you know what you're looking for, you may also discover some real collector items at garage sales. Archers wanting to try traditional archery often pick up an inexpensive bow then trade up to something more to their liking as it becomes available.

Nothing bore out George and Tom's comments like my visit to the "Leather Wall," a message center on the internet for archers interested in traditional equipment. I posted a thread on the web site and asked the following question, "Why is traditional archery important to you and why is it important to pass it on to the next generation?"

Following are just a few of the many responses I received from all over the country.

"I like the simplicity, the natural feel of the simple bow. It feels like an extension of myself."

"When I'm hunting with my bow I feel like 10,000 years worth of bowhunters are walking beside me. It's almost spiritual."

"There is nothing that compares with the feeling of drawing a smooth longbow and watching a cedar shaft in flight."

"I love the simplicity, the lack of gadgets. It allows me to briefly escape the modern world and experience the world at the level man has experienced it in times past."

"Shooting traditional equipment with my family has taught my children and me lessons in patience and perseverance. It has taught us to slow down and appreciate things more."

And finally, this comment that somehow for me sums up the feeling of the traditional shooter. "It's a soul thing, archery is not in your blood, it's in your heart."

If there is any doubt about the growth of interest in traditional archery one has to look no further then the annual Eastern Traditional Archery Rendezvous held at Ski Denton in Denton Hill, during July. In 1989 the rendezvous attracted 200 shooters. In 1997 there were more than 8,000 participants, and included people from four countries and 45 states. The archers gath-

Here are some sources to learn more about traditional archery equipment:

Web Site: The Stickbow at http://www.stickbow.com

Magazines: *Traditional Archery* and *Instinctive Archer*

Books: *The Traditional Way* and *The Mystique and Heritage of Archery*, by Fred Anderson

Catalogs: *Three Rivers Archery Supplies*, Ashley, Indiana

ered for a weekend of shooting, trading equipment and skill demonstrations, but mainly for the fellowship, and as one attendee told me, "Just to watch the arc of the arrow." Regardless of skill level, everyone at Denton Hill is equal when it comes to enjoying shooting the bow and arrow. The only thing more plentiful than arrows are smiles.

The growing number of traditional archers, male and female, young and old, was also apparent at the Bowhunters Festival held recently in Forksville, PA. Archers on the shooting lines were using a mixture of every kind of archery equipment imaginable. Standing next to an archer shooting the latest single cam compound bow with carbon arrows, a release and fiber optic sight was an archer with a back quiver full of wooden arrows fletched with turkey feathers, shooting a straight wooden bow without a sight. Side by side they flung their arrows toward a distant deer target. There was no separation of style or equipment; here they were but archers, each enjoying his sport in his own way. Although the equipment may be different, the traditional archer doesn't have to take a back seat to anyone when it comes to hitting the target. This point was driven home to me as I watched two archers shooting with traditional bows at a moving turkey head target at a distance of approximately 20 yards and hitting it at least half the time. While that would be tough shooting for any archer, remember these gentlemen were shooting straight bows with wooden arrows and no sights. Pretty good shooting I would say.

If anyone doubts the attraction of primitive archery equipment, they have to look no further than the recent bowhunting regulation passed in Illinois that allows the use of knapped, (hand-chipped) arrowheads made from obsidian or flint. It's important for the archer using modern equipment to remember why he got into archery in the first place. Nine times out of 10 it was for the challenge. What better challenge than to step back to the very basic of equipment. For those who have no experience with traditional equipment, don't doubt its accuracy or efficiency.

The one thing that struck me as common to all the traditional archers with whom I spoke was that their bow and arrow was in someway their personal bridge from today's hectic modern world to one of the past. One with which we share a common bond with those hunters who have gone before us, and one that makes us again feel a part of nature, not assuming to be her master. Traditional archery didn't return, people returned to traditional archery. They returned for the simple joy of shooting a bow unencumbered with mechanics and gadgets. They returned to feel as one with the bow and to bridge, if only for a short time, the gap between the past and present. They did it to again simply experience the joy of watching the arc of the arrow.

Personally, over the past 45 years I have experienced all phases of archery, from stick bows to compounds, from finger shooting to releases, from no sights to 4-power scopes, and I've enjoyed it all. But I must admit there is something magical about a simple bow and a wooden arrow. As I feel the dull thud of the bow and watch the arrow arc toward a distant target, I feel alive and somehow go back to my roots. □

Steeped in history, this old warhorse has stood the test of time. Today, it's a potent cartridge for deer and bears out to 150 yards.

The Venerable .45-70

GENERAL Douglas MacArthur once said, "Old soldiers never die." The same can be said for some ex-military cartridges, and one that comes to mind is the antiquated .45-70 Government cartridge. Calling the .45-70 antiquated is not demeaning; the round is more than 125 years old.

How is a straight-wall cartridge accurate out to about 150 yards able to compete with modern big game cartridges that offer significantly higher muzzle velocities and are accurate out to 400 yards? When it was adopted by the military in 1873, for the single-shot trapdoor version Springfield rifle, the 405-grain .45-70 slug generated a muzzle velocity around 1,300 fps. It served as the official service cartridge for nearly two decades, before being replaced by the .30-40 Krag in 1892.

One of the reasons the .45-70 is still around stems from the fact that many firearm companies produced rifles for the big cartridge, and there also were hundreds of ex-military trapdoor outfits available to the public. In fact, many of these older rigs are still in existence, such as the Remington Rolling Block, Remington Keene, Remington Lee, Model 81 Marlin, Hotckiss and the Winchester Model 86 to name a few.

As mentioned, the.45-70 has been around a long time, and it has seen a good bit of military action in Cuba and the Philippines and played a part on our Western frontier. I'm not sure if the .45-70 was popular with buffalo hunters, but it probably saw some use. Although buffalo hunting had been going on for years, it was after the Civil War that the final onslaught on the buffalo began. Two famous buffalo cartridges were the .40-90 Sharps and the .45-120/550 "Buffalo" Sharps. This later cartridge was deadly beyond 300 yards. With 120 grains of black powder behind a 550-grain bullet, it generated a muzzle velocity (estimated) of 1,400 fps and a muzzle energy of 2,300 foot pounds. It's reasonable to assume that by the time the .45-70 got into civilian hands, the market hunting buffalo days were over.

When the .45-70 was adopted by the military in 1873, it was loaded with a 405-grain bullet and 70 grains of black powder — hence the name .45-70. But the .45-70 actually originated in about 1865. Late in the Civil War the U.S. military decided to adopt a breechloading rifle. After the war there were thousands of Springfield muzzleloading muskets, so the military decided to convert these muskets into breechloaders. To make a long story

short, Erskine S. Allin, who was the master armorer at the Springfield Armory, devised such an alteration, and the project got underway in 1865. Allin's creation eventually became the .45-70 Springfield.

When hunters began using the big cartridge there were demands for other bullet weights. This demand brought about loadings for both 300- and 500-grain bullets. Eventually, the .45-70 began losing ground to higher velocity big game cartridges, and the only load available to the hunter was the original 405-grain bullet.

The resurgence of the .45-70 might be due in part to Federal introducing a 300-grain bullet that exits the muzzle around 1,800 fps. Now, in its Supreme line, Winchester is offering a 300-grain Nosler partition bullet in the .45-70 cartridge.

Helen Lewis



MODEL 1873 Springfield "trapdoor" .45-70 Govt. was not only a top quality military outfit, but was a favorite of deer hunters in the late 1920s and '30s. Any original Springfield, Sharps or rolling block .45-70 rifle must be inspected by a competent gunsmith familiar with these actions before any ammunition is fired in them.

The trapdoor .45-70 and many of its contemporaries are not strong enough to handle modern factory cartridges. Handloading manuals usually show two sets of load combinations, one for the old models, and the other for modern rifles capable of handling more powerful rounds. In fact, the *Speer Reloading Manual #13* devotes three sections to the .45-70 cartridge: .45-70 Government (trapdoor rifles), .45-70 Government (lever actions) and .45-70 Government bolt actions and modern single-shots only.

Speer claims the reason for the three sections is due to the .45-70's popularity and flexibility. The first section on trapdoor rifles reminds the shooter that this rifle is more than 120 years old and that smokeless powder did not exist in 1873. The old rifle must be treated with respect. The manual goes on to say that a .45-70 cartridge loaded well under the maximum average pressure of 28,000 cup (copper units of pressure) is suitable for trapdoor actions. However, and this is a big however, any trapdoor Springfield, Sharps or rolling block rifle must be inspected by a competent gunsmith who is familiar with these old actions before shooting any ammunition.

The second section in the Speer manual covers lever action rifles, and it claims that owners of modern actions can see a significant improvement over some factory ammunition by handloading close to the industry pressure limit of 28,000 cup. This section also warns that many original 1885 and 1886 Winchester rifles have seen considerable use (and abuse) since they left the factory. Some may have been altered or repaired by persons of questionable competence. Again, have these rifles thoroughly checked by a gunsmith who is familiar with these old rifles.

The third section lists loads for bolt action rifles and modern single-shot outfits. These loads approach average pressures of 35,000 cup for use only in the strongest actions. This loading data applies to the Ruger No. 1 and No. 3 single-shots, the Browning Model 1885 single-shot and M98 Mausers properly converted to fire .45-70

ammunition. The top loads with the 350-grain bullet produce nearly 3,700 foot pounds of muzzle energy.

Although the .45-70 was not around in the heyday of buffalo shooting, the 45-caliber was a favorite. Frank Mayer was considered one of the best hide hunters of the day, and although he had great success with a .45-90 Sharps, he eventually switched to the "Buffalo" Sharps, which carried the fearsome name of .45/120/550. The cartridge was a 45-caliber using 120 grains of black powder behind a 550-grain bullet.



SEVERAL MANUFACTURERS offer modern and replica rifles chambered for the .45-70 Govt. cartridge. Navy Arms has a replica Sharps Buffalo Rifle, Marlin offers the big cartridge in its lever action Model 1895SS, and Browning and New England Firearms offer .45-70 single-shot rifles.

I don't know if Mayer was a gunsmith or a mathematician, but he estimated that the 120-grain charge pushed the bullet out of the muzzle around 1,400 feet per second with a muzzle energy of 2,300 foot pounds. Those are pretty impressive figures, and it would be safe to assume that with such a low velocity, Mayer shot buffalo at close range. Nothing could be further from the truth, however. His favorite method was to stake out about 300 yards from a grazing herd and pick the bulls off without causing the herd to stampede. Using just a cross-stick type rest, he got a bull with every shot. After killing about 50, his skinners would move in while he cleaned his rifle and loaded cartridges for the next day's hunt. Legend has it that most of the dead bulls were within a 300-foot square area.

It seems incredulous that Mayer would put nearly 1,000 feet between himself and the herd, but he did it to keep from stampeding the animals. But with an estimated 1,400 fps velocity, what type of trajectory arc would the old .45/120/550 have?

I did a computerized computation of Mayer's load combination, although I had to more or less guess at the bullet's ballistic coefficient. Using a BC for a 500-grain cast slug, and with a muzzle velocity of 1,400 fps, Mayer's bullet with the rifle sighted-in slightly more than two feet high at 100 yards, would be 29 inches high at 150 yards, 26 inches high at 200 yards and dead on at 300. With 2,393 pounds of muzzle energy, the velocity would drop to 1,003 fps with 1,227 foot pounds of energy at 300 yards. That's still a pretty fair blow. Keep in mind that Mayer thoroughly knew his bullet's trajectory arc.

I've had a battered 1873 trapdoor .45-70 for more than 30 years. It has a full wood stock, ramrod and sling swivels. The barrel is 32½ inches long and the total length of the rifle is more than 51 inches. I have never fired it, and it's a pretty good bet I never will, although it appears to be in good working order. Every now and then I get the old ex-military rifle out just to get a taste of the past. The workmanship is very good, and there is a solid click when the trapdoor is closed. There isn't a piece of plastic on it.

Some dedicated older hunters claim the .45-70 is the ideal deer and bear cartridge. True, its effective range is about 150 yards — unless you are a Frank Mayer — but with Winchester's new 300-grain load (I have no .45-70 data on this new round), a hunter shouldn't have to worry about trailing a deer after a well-placed shot. Long live the .45-70. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Michigan still has the largest elk herd east of the Mississippi River with about 800 animals — down from a high of 1,350 in the mid-1990s.

There may be as few as 15 Siberian tigers remaining in the wild in China due to deteriorating habitat. Another 380 of the tigers are believed to survive in the wild in Russia.

A record 260 nesting bald eagle pairs fledged 368 young in 1999 in Maryland. Nineteen out of 23 counties in Maryland now have eagles.

Hunters took 178,102 deer in Virginia during the 1998 season — a 10 percent decline from the previous season.

There were an estimated 378,000 ducks and 291,000 geese taken in North Dakota in 1998. Mallards comprised 54 percent of the ducks, while Canada geese made up 54 percent of the goose harvest.

A recent study indicated that 36 percent of licensed hunters nationwide hunted with a bow at least once during the past two years.

A Missouri hunter bagged a fox squirrel in 1998 that weighed a whopping six pounds.

In 1998, 101,000 Texas waterfowl hunters took more than 1.5 million ducks — an increase of 29 percent from 1997 and a new harvest record. On average, each hunter bagged 13 ducks during the season.

Hunters in New York took 597 black bears during the 1998 seasons.

A record 57 nesting bald eagle pairs fledged 72 eaglets in Ohio in 1999. In 1998, 46 pairs produced 43 offspring.

As of October 1998, public hunting was allowed on 290 of the nation's 514 national wildlife refuges.

A Wisconsin man who shot a wolf in Michigan was fined $2,500, sentenced to serve time in jail, and was banned from hunting in Michigan for the rest of his life.

The American crocodile was declared an endangered species in 1975, when its population dwindled to 20 nesting females. Biologists now estimate there are about 500 crocodiles in south Florida, including as many as 50 nesting females.

A Colorado man was fined $50,000 and sentenced to a year in jail for the illegal possession of five bighorn sheep.

There were 65,397 vehicle/deer collisions in Michigan in 1998, resulting in 2,318 humans injured and four fatalities.

Answers: American goldfinch, blue jay, northern cardinal, downy woodpecker, European starling, house finch, great-horned owl, horned lark, indigo bunting, and dark-eyed junco.

indigo bunting.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

STAR BARN OWLS, by Barbara Banco, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Rare birds in Pennsylvania, barn owls are found in the more open areas of the state, where they prey upon rats, mice and other small mammals. Cavity nesters, these secretive owls readily adapt to manmade nesting devices.



Star Barn Owls

***PRINTS** are on acid-free, 100 percent rag paper; image is 15 x 22 1/2 inches. Cost is $125, plus $7.50 s&h, (for framing add $97.50, plus $15 s&h).*

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Reclaiming the Alleghenies



FOLLOW the wild world of Pennsylvania elk throughout the year in this exciting new video. Hosted by PGC biologist Rawley Cogan, featuring stunning video by award winning videographer Hal Korber, and written by renowned nature writer Scott Weidensaul, **Pennsylvania Elk** covers the history of these animals in the state, showcasing the work of the many people who have brought these animals back to levels unimaginable just a couple decades ago.



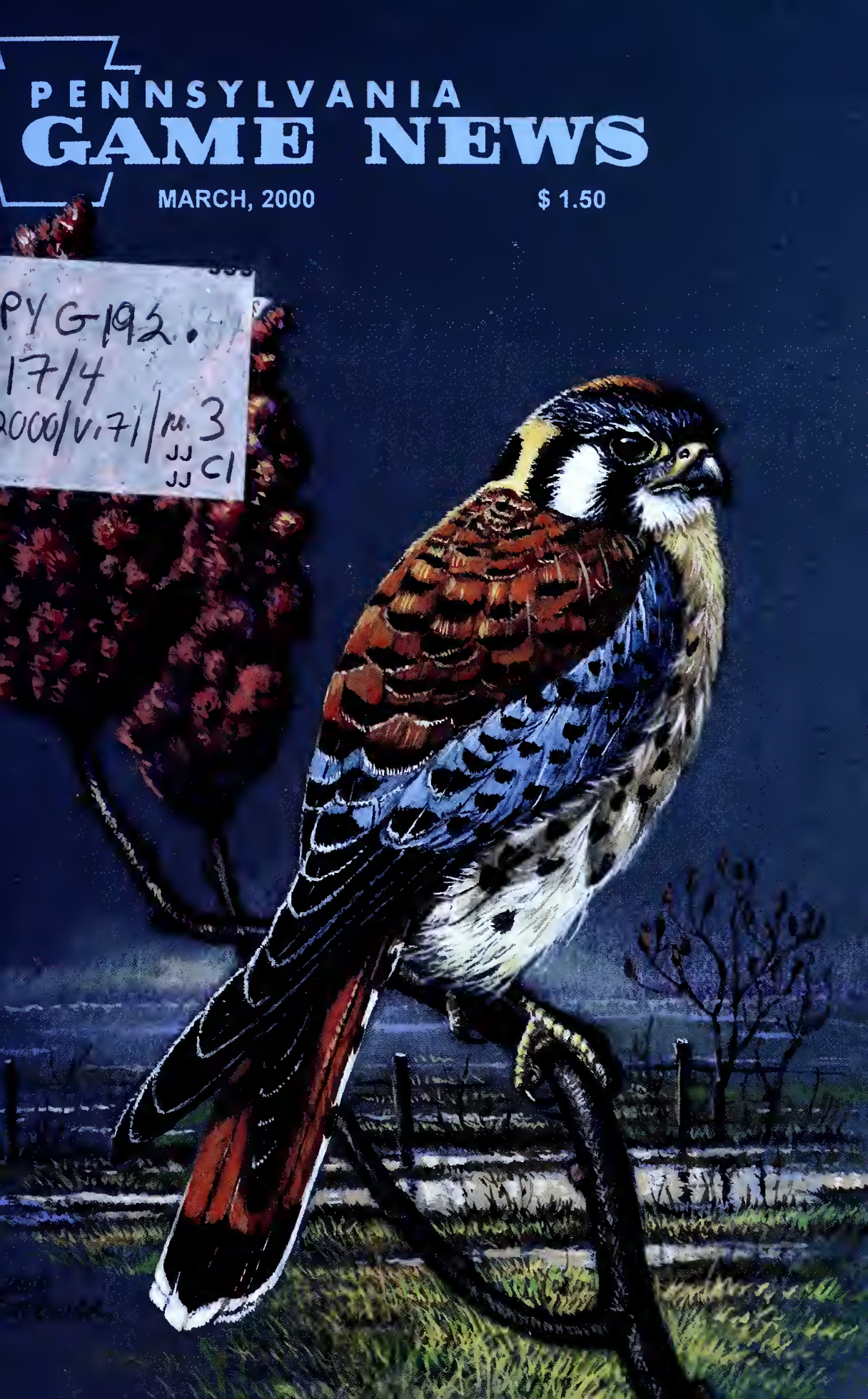
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Star Barn Owls

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Volume 71 ● No. 3
MARCH 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial

Thanks for Getting Involved

ABOUT A YEAR AGO I proposed — and this Commission endorsed — trying a new approach to fixing the state's hunting seasons. This was not a new policy, or rule-making. In fact, it wasn't, I was told, even a proposal. It was a concept.

Since I recommended pursuing this concept, it bore my name, a distinction I soon found that made me both famous and infamous, depending upon who you talked to. This proposal, which established a template of new-looking hunting seasons, was the outgrowth of more than two years of feedback from hunters who talked to or wrote me. It was generated because the resounding message that I have gotten since I took office as a commissioner is that hunters want to change our traditional hunting season structure.

Some of my hunting season template highlights were a 7-day doe season with a Saturday opener; a Saturday opener for buck season; and 65 days of small game hunting. The template, however, did not promote or recommend Sunday hunting. Regardless, it was labeled with that dubious distinction, and the Game Commission consequently heard from close to 300 Pennsylvanians about their opposition to this issue.

Hundreds of people took the time to write the Game Commission to let us know how they felt about the concept. Some hunters liked the season package I put together. Others recommended changes. Still others told us to leave the seasons as they are. Tradition, they said, is a good thing.

Much effort was expended by hundreds of people to apprise the Game Commission of their feelings on this subject. And when you consider all comments, like those made verbally to agency employees in person or in telephone conversations, it's not stretching it to say that probably thousands offered their opinions on this issue. That, ladies and gentlemen, is what we commissioners were after: public interaction and direction.

As a result of your input, the Game Commission has a better sense about how Pennsylvanians feel about a variety of season and bag limit issues. I thank you for getting involved, for letting us know you're out there and watching. We commissioners recognize these issues are critically important to thousands of people, and they don't necessarily have black-and-white courses for action. When you get involved, we can better serve you and the resource. We appreciate the effort and advice.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank agency staff for taking the considerable time required to analyze and record the feedback generated by the concept. I know there were times when personnel were overwhelmed by concept mail, in addition to doing their regular work, and they got the job done. Thanks so much.

Finally, I'd like to thank each of my fellow commissioners, for making sure this progressive concept saw the light of day. We all know change can be unpopular and revolutionary, always attracting opposition. But that doesn't mean it isn't beneficial to most, or a step in the right direction. We commissioners have heard from the public and know more now than we did last year, when we deliberated the 1999-2000 seasons and bag limits. I trust each of us will consider this feedback as we consider this year's slate of seasons and bag limits. Thank you. — *Samuel J. Dunkle, Game Commissioner, presented at the January 2000 Game Commission meeting.*

letters

Editor:

Just wanted to let you know that on the February cover, the rabbit is running one way and the tracks are going the other.

R. Shimer,
Bainbridge, NY

Thanks to all of you who wrote. We know better, of course, it just got by us.

Editor:

On my wall is a ring-necked pheasant mount I had made nearly three decades ago.

Knowing dust is the culprit that ages feathers, about every five years I spray the mount lightly with a clear silicone spray, and I dust it about once a year. Cared for this way, the ringneck looks just as colorful as the day it rose from a cornfield years ago.

S. Yancis,
Wilkes-Barre

Editor:

Born in Pennsylvania, I have been an Ohio State Park officer for 18 years, and I've been reading *Game News* for as long as I can remember; Ohio doesn't have anything to compare. I buy a nonresident Pennsylvania hunting license every year, mainly for the flintlock season. From my perspective, you're doing a great job.

D.J. Reed,
Williamsfield

Editor:

In the "Naturalist's Eye" column in October, it was stated that I was a member of the Presque Isle Advisory Committee. Actually, I have been serving on the Environmental Committee of the Presque Isle Partnership.

Evelyn Anderson,
Erie

Editor:

As the state with the most hunters, isn't it time Pennsylvania adopts a Quality Deer Management Program? A program like those in Florida, Arkansas or Mississippi, with their 3-point or 5-inch antler restrictions, would increase the number of trophy deer here.

B. Long,
Perkasie

See this month's "News" section for new deer management initiatives the agency is exploring. Perhaps some day we will be able to offer some sort of "quality" deer management program like you describe.

Editor:

I am writing to thank you for allowing people with disabilities to hunt with a crossbow. Getting this permit, I can once again hunt with my son and in the most beautiful part of the fall.

G.H. Kinley, Jr.
Cogan Station

Editor:

Just finished reading Bob Sopchick's "The Edges of Heaven," in the January issue, and I would like to commend him for his excellent writing. The story nearly brought a tear to my eye.

Congratulations to *Game News*, too, for "telling it like it is," at least as long as I've been a subscriber, and that is more than 50 years.

M. Leshak,
Northampton

Editor:

When I recently moved to Alaska for my job, I figured there would be all sorts of hunting opportunities for many species.

Well, my vision is clearer now. Alaska's seasons are short, and getting to areas where game can be found is expensive. I miss my Pennsylvania woods, and look forward to my *Game News* every month; it's like being back home in Wilkes-Barre, 5,500 miles away.

J. Welgoss,
Palmer, AK

Editor:

A teacher for 12 years now, I've developed somewhat of a daily routine. I eat a pack of crackers in the morning, floss my teeth after lunch, and read *Game News* during silent reading.

I was nonetheless surprised, though, when a student gave me as a holiday gift, a pack of crackers, a box of dental floss, and a copy of *Game News*.

M. Herzing,
Aspers

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Breeding and Training Brittanys

By Doug Stetler

STAN ROZOWSKI'S parents bought him a Brittany pup for his 12th birthday. The liver and white male, Treve, proved to Stan that Brittanys could become both good hunting companions as well as good house pets. Treve was eager to learn and anxious to please, and soon became Stan's best buddy.

As time went by, Treve passed on and Stan got older. Soon Stan's best buddy was a girl named Jeanne. From the time Stan and Jeanne got married they had talked about getting a Brittany, but because their budget wouldn't allow for the purchase of a dog from a good hunting bloodline, it remained a goal. Then, several years ago, Jeanne surprised Stan with a female Brittany pup, which they named Brooke. She became the start of the Broken Wing Kennel bloodline.

Brooke was willing to learn, and although she became an excellent hunting companion and was good at finding birds, Stan and Jeanne didn't have the knowledge needed to bring out the best in her. So they put forth an all out effort to become the best trainers possible. "With no mentor to help us," Stan recalls, "we read articles, watched videos and attended seminars on raising, training and handling dogs. Then we skimmed out the knowledge needed to achieve specific goals. We also researched bloodlines before breeding Brooke."

When the puppies arrived, the Rozowski's two daughters, 7-year-old Jamie and 11-year-old Jennifer, became more involved with training and caring for the dogs. As the Rozowski family invested more time with the dogs, they started to accomplish much more than they ever thought possible. They heard about the AKC Hunting Tests for Pointing Breeds program and took their dogs to an outing to see how they would measure up. Stan entered Broken Wing Thunder Belle (daughter of Brooke), and she received a qualifying score and a ribbon in her first hunt test. In the following months, Broken Wing Thunder Bones (son of Belle) was entered by Jeanne and kept the bloodline tradition, qualifying in each hunt test category entered.

During one of these outings, Jennifer asked her mom and dad if she could enter Mom's dog, because they worked well together at home. The parents agreed. An announcement was made that an 11-year-old girl was to run a Brittany in the next hunt test. The dogs were off with the gallery in tow. Jamie kept her cool and handled the dog the same way she did at home. Belle qualified, giving Jamie her first ribbon in her first hunt test. The Rozowski family and their Brittanys soon became known in ARC Hunt Test Pointing Breed circles.

I asked Stan and Jeanne to give me some pointers on how to choose a pup. "We have no preference between male and female," Jeanne said. "We look for good conformation, front legs in straight lines, straight back, and the tail high on the rump, so it


M. Girio Brummett



will come straight up when on point (judges look for this). When checking out another breeder's litter, we get to see the pups only briefly. They may have just eaten, be sleepy or not feeling well. We don't know if we're seeing them at their best or worst, or how they react to various situations. So it was neat to have our own litter of pups to canvass for seven weeks. We could watch them at different times and see which was most active, dominant or inquisitive. I like a dog that shows some awareness of people. Pups naturally bond with each other, but I watch for the pup that turns its head to look at me when I clap my hands and call to it. I make sure I'm not more than five feet from the litter, because the pups' hearing and eyesight are not fully developed yet. Some pups take to people so much that they leave their littermates and walk over when a person enters a room. We like to thoroughly check bloodlines before breeding, then spend a lot of time with the litter so we can pick a puppy that we feel will outdo the dogs we have."

Stan added some advice of his own. "When the pups are four to five weeks old, I introduce them to baby pigeons or quail. I look for a dog that shows some interest in being around birds. Another thing I do is toss a small paint roller cover close to a pup to see if it will pick it up and carry it around, indicating a desire to retrieve. Some pups have actually brought the roller back to me on the first try, instinctively."

So you've chosen the best pup. Now what? How do you turn it into a good, all-around pointing and retrieving dog?

Stan said, "We went through a lot of growing pains over the years, as we not only trained our dogs but also learned from them. We constantly watch every move a dog makes and ask why? The dog will give you lots of information if you keep an open eye and an open mind. When problems arise we try new methods. It takes a lot of love and persistence with dogs to achieve goals. You must learn to think like a dog and see things and situations as they do. It's also important to not try to achieve results too fast. Always make outings enjoyable for the dog. Let the dog run around first to get rid of excess energy. For a young dog — less than four months — daily training sessions should be no longer than five to 10 minutes at a time, with 10 minutes of playtime between them. Do this several times a day if possible. If the dog seems tired or disinterested, stop the training for the day. Pups four to eight months old may be trained for 15 minutes a session, after their exercise. No matter what age, they should be taught only one command at a time. Always finish the day on a good note. Remember not to push too hard. Let puppies be puppies. Before you can have a great dog, you must first have a happy puppy."

Jeanne broke in, "We always like to start with a 5-week-old pup, that already knows how to point instinctively, and then enhance its natural point and make it stylish. If the breeding is right, the natural instinct to point will be there. We try to make it fun for the dog. This way we can keep its attention span longer. The dog should learn its name in two to three days, and learn the basics of retrieving in about two weeks.

We like to train with whistle commands, but if we do talk to the dogs it's in single words. We do not try to teach the dogs the English language. When you hunt with us, we only do quiet talking among ourselves."

I asked the Rozowskis the main reason for their success as handlers. "Never give a command you cannot enforce," answered Stan. "Your dog must know that here means here and not halfway here, etc. The next most important things are the right breeding of pointing bloodlines, and using pigeons, quail or pheasants to train with. The 5-week-old pups get introduced to live baby birds, and adult birds are used in training the older dogs. It's very important to train with live birds. Using dummies only teaches a dog to hunt dead birds, even if scent is added. A live bird smells entirely different. We use dummies with pheasant wing feathers tied to them for retrieving practice only."



Jeanne said, "I would like to reemphasize that our dogs love hunting for us because we make it fun, and we also try not to confuse them with long verbal commands. We don't chastise a dog when it messes up. Instead, if the dog is having a bad day, it is hooked on a leash and taken back to its kennel in the truck, that's it. And when a dog performs well, its reward is gentle strokes over the back from shoulder to tail, that's all, period."

Stan mentioned, "We haven't talked about shock collars yet, or as we like to call them, training collars. The key to this type of training is gentle correction through repetition. First, our dogs are taught the skills we want while on a check cord. This gives us direct control when we give them a command. We move to a shock collar only to remind a dog when it doesn't do something that it knows, such as holding a point without creeping up on a stationary bird, or hunting the high grass with us instead of taking the easy path up a farm lane. For example: When the dog encounters a deer and chases it, I don't yell at the dog to stop. Instead, I give a light shock on the collar and the dog thinks the deer somehow inflicted the correction on its neck. It will then make a decision to stay away from the deer so it doesn't get corrected again. This way you can train a dog and still remain its buddy."

I asked the Rozowskis about their future goals. "Our main objective is to continue to improve our bloodline with each litter. We keep track of all the pups that leave our kennel. When they are nine months old, we call up the new owners and ask how their dog is doing. Does the dog respond well to training or is there anything about the dog they don't like? We are careful to build a gene pool that meets our expectations. We spare no expense where our dogs' training or health is concerned. Our new kennel provides the dogs with a healthy home and we are careful to keep it that way. It's important to keep an eye out for any medical needs that develop and get treatment right away. We made a thorough investigation of dog foods and chose the best one to meet their needs and give them a healthy balanced diet," Stan replied.

"Presently, our goal is to achieve the highest level in AKC Hunt Tests with our dogs," said Jeanne. "Then we may possibly go into AKC Field Trial work. Most importantly, we really enjoy the many hours spent afield with dogs that like to do everything they can to please their handlers." □

What's in a Critter's Name?

By Bill Weekes

WHAT'S IN a scientific name? Every living thing discovered has one. For mankind, it's *Homo sapiens*; for white-tailed deer, it's *Odocoileus, virginianus;* for gray squirrel, it's *Sciurus carolinensis*.

The scientific naming of organisms is called nomenclature, and because it comes in two parts, nomenclature is termed binomial. Binary nomenclature was used by an 18th century Swedish botanist, Carolus Linnaeus. He had a passion for classifying species. He hit upon the idea of giving each living thing a shorthand description; one word for the species, one word for its genus. This idea spared biologists the drudgery of trying to describe living things in great detail when naming them. Linnaeus gave a handle to specific identification.

Binary nomenclature consists of the generic, the group name of similar species to which the living thing belongs and the specific scientific name of the species itself within the group. With animal designations, the generic name is always capitalized at its beginning while the second, specific name is not.



Scientific or technical names derived from Latin, Greek and other languages have been added and many have been revised since Linnaeus's time.

What do these scientific names designate? The names may describe an animal's size, form, color, habits or habitat, the kinds of food it eats, its external characteristics (skin, hair, nose, eyes, etc.), its geographical location, its geological niches in time (Eocene, Miocene, etc.), or its classical derivation.

Many wild animals have been dubbed with the species name *canadensis*, which means "Canada" (New Latin), with *ensis* being Latin for "belonging to." Hence the beaver's genus *Castor* (Greek *Castor*, "beaver") and the otter's genus *Lutra* (*Latin* for "otter") means animals whose home territory perhaps originated within the territorial confines of Canada. There's Canada goose's name *Branta canadensis*, with *Branta* being New Latin for "the brant goose," so named because of "burnt, reddish-brown coloration." Other location names like *americanus* and *virginianus* are of obvious derivation.

Scientific names are composed of word parts (one or two root prefixes and suffixes). One word may come from Greek while the other from Latin. Sometimes it's impossible to see the connection between the scientific name and the animal to which it re-



fers, even if the word derivation is known.

Sometimes the scientific name of the organism is followed by the name of the scientist who first coined the name, such as the ruffed grouse: *Bonansa umbellus umbellus* (Linnaeus); American woodcock: *Philohela minor* (Gmelin), now obsolete. Where there are three scientific names, as in this paragraph, the third name designates a subspecies.

Taking some common wildlife species, one might hypothesize as to how the scientific name applies.

- Bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*); *Colinus* comes from the Spanish *colin*, meaning "a partridge;" hence a partridge of Virginia.
- Mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*); *Zenis* from the French, meaning "zenith;" *ai* from the Greek "ever, always, forever;" *dur* from the Latin *duras*, meaning "durable;" *macr* from the Greek *makros*, meaning "long or large." From this, one may think of a bird that's forever flying high for long distances.
- Wood duck (*Aix sponsa*); *aix* is Greek for "a water bird" while *sponsa* is Latin for "a bride." Perhaps the extraordinary beauty of this duck led some biologist to label this species with the above appellation.
- Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*); *bonasa* perhaps comes from the Latin *bonus* for "good" and *assum* for "a roast." *Umbella* is Latin for "a sunshade." A good bird for eating that casts a long shadow for the hunter, or flies into the sun.
- Mallard (*Anas platyrhynches*); *anatis* is Latin for "a duck;" *platy* is Greek for "flat, broad, wide;" *rhynch* is Greek for "a beak snout" (a duck with a flat bill).
- Ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchious*); *phasianus* is Latin and *phasianos* is Greek for a river in Colchis that flows into the Black Sea.
- Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*); *Meleagris* is Greek for "a guinea fowl;" *gallus* is Latin for "a cock, pertaining to poultry; fowl-like."
- American woodcock (*Scolopas minor*); *Scolop* is Greek for "anything pointed;" *minor* is Latin for "smaller." A small bird with a pointed beak.
- Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*, or *S. transitionalis*); *Sylva* is Latin for "a wood;" *lag* is Greek for "a hare." A hare (really a rabbit) of

Florida found in the woods, or a rabbit that crosses state lines to be found in many places (*trans* is Latin for "across").

• White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*); *Odont* is Greek for "a tooth;" *koilos*, Greek for "hollow" while *koilia* is Greek for "the belly." A ruminant with a complex stomach that chews its food to subsist.

• Eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*); *sciurus* is Latin for "a squirrel;" *niger* is Latin for "dark, black." Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*); a squirrel from the Carolinas.

• Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*); *pro* is a Greek suffix meaning "before, in front of, forth;" *kyon* is Greek for "dog, or like a dog;" *lotor*, New Latin for "a washer." Perhaps a dog-like animal that washes (its food) in front of it.

• Red fox (*Vulpes fulva*); *Vulp* is Latin for "fox" while *fulv* is Latin for "yellowish-red."

• Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*); *Ur* is from the Greek *oura* for the tail;" *cin* is Greek from *kineo* meaning "to move" and *argenteus* for "silvery." So, perhaps, this is an animal with a prominent tail that moves with a silvery grace (like quick silver?); or whose gray fur looks silvery.

• Opossum (*Didelphis virginianus*); this ubiquitous animal, perhaps first observed by naturalists in the Virginia colony has two (*di*, Latin for "two") wombs (from the Greek *delphys*), which refers to the fact that not only do these marsupials nourish their young as fetuses in stages both internal (in the womb) and external (in the pouch), but also the females actually bear two vaginas (the males having two phalluses).

• Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*); the genus name is taken from the North American Indian name for muskrat, while *zibethicus is* New Latin for "musky-odored."

• Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*); the genus name is taken from the French, meaning "mountain mouse" while *monax* is Greek *monach* for "solitary." A loner mammal that looks like a huge mouse; or a solitary mammal that lives in the mountains.

• Striped skunk (*Mephitus mephitus*); the word comes from the Latin meaning for "bad odor." Why is it repeated? Because the odor must really be bad.

• Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*); the Greek *erethiz* means "to excite, provoke" while *dorsat* is from the New Latin, meaning "back." An animal that responds by getting its (quilled) back up when provoked.

• Badger (*Taxidea taxus*); *taxus* is New Latin for "badger," *taxo*, Greek "to put in order," perhaps a tidy animal (maybe because of its habit of burying the remains of its prey).

• Grizzly bear (*Ursus horribilis*); *Ursus* is Latin for bear; *horribilis* for "horrible bear," right? Wrong. *Horrid* is Latin for "standing on end," a bear that stands on its hind legs (then, perhaps, looking horrible).

• Moose (*Alces americana*); *Alke* is Greek for elk, also for "prowess, boldness." Why is a moose called an elk?

• American elk (*Cervus canadensis*); *Cervinus* is Middle Latin for "tawny, like a deer;" *cervic*, Latin for "the neck," one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the elk other than its outrageous rack.

• Coyote (*Canis latrans*); *Canis* is Latin for dog and *latr* is Latin for "robber, freebooter." The coyote is intensely successful as a species because of its ability to scrounge around for sustenance.

• Pocket gopher (*Thomomys talpoides*); *Thomos* is Greek for "a heap" and *talpa* is Latin for "a mole;" a burrowing creature famous for its mounds (heaped-up earth).

• Prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido americanus*); *tympanon* is Greek for "a drum" and *cupidus* is Latin for "eager with desire," which refers to the noisy mating antics of this species. □



Becoming a Hunter

By Connie Mertz

"ARE YOU sitting down?" Anna asked when I answered the telephone. I had no idea what to expect from my younger friend. "I want to tell you something that will shock you." My curiosity piqued. "I want to be a hunter," she said.

I fumbled for words at her announcement. Anna, the girl who just couldn't understand why anyone would hunt? Anna, the girl who was a stranger to the outdoors? Before I responded she quickly asked, "What do I have to do to get started?"

"You have to pass a Hunter-Trapper Education course," I replied.

"When's the next one being offered?"

I laughed. "Anna, I don't know of any in our area until next March."

It was only early November, but March seemed like an eternity away for an enthusiastic future hunter. "That's okay. How soon can I register?"

Anna knew I was an HTE instructor at the Montour Preserve, and it was expected that she'd attend a class held there. I assured her I would let her know the dates when they became available, so she could be included in our spring class.

When I returned the call with the essential information a few months later, I feared she might have changed her mind.

Quite the contrary; she was as excited as ever. I was thrilled and couldn't wait until I could take her hunting with me. Female friends who hunted were few and far between, so like Anna, I was already anticipating the fall hunting season.

True to her word, Anna registered and attended the class. She read the manual cover to cover, absorbing every detail. She took notes and asked a barrage of questions to clarify the information presented. Anna's efforts paid off as she aced the test.



John, a relative, had been her inspiration. He spent many hours that summer giving her instruction and hands-on experience target shooting. She shot his 12-gauge and became accustomed to a single-shot .410 that she'd be using for squirrels. In the meantime, she continued to bombard me with questions about hunting.

In preparation for the fall season, we invited her and John over for an evening of trapshooting. Sharing my Remington semi-automatic 20-gauge with her, we engaged in some friendly competition. I was flabbergasted as I watched her bust claybird after claybird. "This is the first time you've ever shot at a moving target?" I teased.

"Yeah," she said in a disappointed tone. "Guess I'm not doing very well."

"Anna!" I exclaimed, surprised at her remarks, "You're hitting practically every target."

She shrugged, "But I'm missing, too."

We didn't keep score, but I was pleased with how our claybird session had improved my shooting ability. I was happy with my results and thrilled with Anna's. Maybe she was experiencing beginner's luck, but I knew that if any squirrels came into shooting range, they didn't stand a chance.

John and Anna were out early on the long-awaited opening day. Within a short time, she had bagged two. "It was such a thrill," she later told me. "I felt like a hunter."

At last our afternoon of hunting squirrels on our farm arrived. I knew she was an inexperienced hunter, and I felt responsible for her. Safety was foremost on my mind, but I didn't have to be concerned. Anna handled her shotgun as if she had been hunting as long as I had.

I chose an excellent spot for squirrels in a stand of pines. I had bagged many there during my 25 years of hunting, and felt our chances were excellent. Unfortunately, the fall afternoon wasn't conducive to squirrel hunting. A chilly wind whipped through the pines, knocking branches and trees together. Seeing a squirrel in such conditions would be tough.

While we sat, watching and waiting on the pine bank, movement caught my eye. About 80 yards away we watched four does appear from a grassy field and enter the woods. "I've never seen deer this close before," Anna whispered. "This is so exciting."

I told her to sit still, hoping the deer would make their way in our direction. One doe did cross the little road separating the two strips of woodlands. Anna was spell-

bound. I took the opportunity to share with her safe and unsafe shooting scenarios, to prep her for the upcoming rifle deer season.

We watched until the deer disappeared and then decided to trek to another squirrel hunting spot on the farm. She walked slowly and quietly, scanning the trees for any movement. As talkative as Anna usually is, she remained silent. She was hunting, and all her attention was on her newly found passion. My new hunting buddy continued to impress me.

Just as we turned to go into another narrow strip of woods, I stopped abruptly. "Anna," I said in an excited whisper, "there's a flock of turkeys down there." Anna knelt beside me. "Tell you what, I'll stay here and you follow the mowed path around the field. Walk quietly, and maybe you can catch a glimpse of them." I watched her step slowly and silently out of sight. It seemed like an eternity until she returned. "Did you see any?" I asked.

"At least 10." Then she paused and added, "Oh, why can't it be turkey season?"

"Were there any gobblers?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. I was just so excited about seeing turkeys, I didn't even think to look. Besides, what does a beard look like?"

"You've never seen turkeys in the wild before?"

"No, I sure haven't. You know, they're big birds."

"Well, when the fall turkey season opens, you and John will have to come over." There was no doubt she'd take me up on my offer.

We trudged up the hill to the house, our game bags empty, but we had a great afternoon. "You know what the hardest thing about all this is?" Anna asked while we were warming up indoors. "My parents just don't understand why I want to hunt. My mom, especially, can't believe I'd actually shoot an animal. She is so against me shooting, period."

I saw the dejected look on Anna's face as she shared her feelings with me. Yet her desire to hunt was evident, and I sensed no one would deter her from her new love. I admired her determination to enjoy hunting despite the opinion of her family.

As her first year of hunting progressed, she endured the cold, bitter days of the antlerless season, not even giving up when she sank knee-high into a swamp. With her .410 she had bagged a couple of squirrels, dressed and cooked them, and she enjoyed every bit.

When I bagged an 8-point buck on the opening day, close to the same spot where Anna and I had watched the deer only two months before, it was torture to wait until she and John returned from their day afield. She was tired from being out from before dawn until dusk, but she shared in my excitement. Her day was uneventful, but she spoke up when I felt sorry that she hadn't even seen a deer.

"Hey, I have to put my time in just like you did. I can wait a couple more years if I have to."

Anna continues to be an inspiration to me. Her willingness to seek advice and to put into practice what she has been taught in the HTE class has given me an entirely different outlook on hunting. I no longer take hunting for granted. Because of Anna, I've experienced a new excitement every time I go hunting. Hunting is again fresh for me through the eyes of Anna.

Anna celebrated her 33rd birthday in November, and not only will she continue hunting with John, she also can't wait until the day when her three daughters are old enough to hunt. Her oldest daughter, Heather, is already talking about hunting, and she's not 12 yet. No doubt about it, Anna has found her niche in the outdoor world. □

Feast of the Beast

By Anthony Marino

OCTOBER in northeastern Pennsylvania means many things, but for me and the crew I hunt with, pheasant and rabbit hunting just might lead the list. When pheasant and rabbit season rolls around, Saturdays usually finds our 6-man crew heading for the cornfields and heavy brush. These are the hiding places for the wily pheasant and the swift cottontail. Our hope is to harvest enough game to provide us with a hearty meal at our annual gathering called the "Beast Feast."

Hunting and fishing are ways we relieve the tensions of everyday life. For 25 years my friends and I have culminated our hunting and fishing efforts with the annual Beast Feast.

This year's feast will be our 25th. Although it does not, and will never reach the national prominence of holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, to us it's the most important event of the year. This affair features sumptuous dishes fit for a king. Rabbit and squirrel chili, pheasant fricasee, marinated deer meat, "Ali Oop's" famous potatoes, and "Hogger's" homemade wine. These are only a few of the dishes. All those who attend contribute in some way to make the Beast Feast the social event of the year.

It's the first day of the general small game season, and the boys and I load the trucks and head south. Our expectations are high. There are six hunters and three dogs; German shorthair pointers named Kaiser, Rommel and Heidi. We hope the dogs will raise some birds and maybe scare up a few rabbits. Winding through farm country we arrive at our first stop. This is one of our favorite locations that we've been hunting for many years. A majority of the farm owners know us and allow us to hunt on their property. We never hunt on a farmer's property unless we have permission, whether we've been there before or not. Landowners respect hunters who respect their property. When we follow the rules and are courteous and respectful, farmers allow us to hunt every year.

Our first farm has four cornfields with heavy grass in between and heavy brush around the perimeter. The air, filled with the damp smell of autumn, is warmer than we would like, about 45 degrees. As the day wears on the temperature will rise, causing us to work up quite a sweat. As we approach the first field, which is approximately 250 yards long by 60 yards wide, a rabbit bolts from the grass. Jake gets an open shot but misses. We'll be sure to remind him of that shot many times during the day. Because the field is so long, we send two of our crew to the other end. This way, if something is pushed out, we'll have it covered.

The dogs, shaking with anticipation, their noses to the ground, tails wagging vigorously, are ready to go. Ten months have past since we last hunted small game. Finally, the posters are at the other end of the field, and we move in. The dogs are working side to side in front of us. Thirty yards into the field a shot is fired to my right. "What did you shoot at?" I shout to Dave, who is on my right.

"I shot Bugs Bunny," he shouts. Great, that's one rabbit for the pot. Another 20 yards and Kaiser flushes a hen pheasant in


Stanley Beloncis



front of me. "Hen," I yell to the rest of the group, then a rabbit flushes and I get it. Heidi goes on point in front of some downed cornstalks. Bernie flushes the rooster and downs it with one shot. At the end of the field the blockers fire three shots. When we reach them they have two rabbits and a pheasant.

As the day wore on, the first field proved to be the best. We shot a few more rabbits, but pheasants were hard to find. This has been a trend over the past seven or eight years. When we first started hunting in this area 18 years ago, pheasants were plentiful. It was nothing to enter a field and raise up to 10 birds. Now, to raise two or three is quite an accomplishment. At first we thought it was hunting that had depleted the pheasant population, but then we began to notice the real problem: habitat. The natural habitat of the pheasant is shrinking fast. The cornfields and heavy brush are quickly being replaced by housing developments. It's now more economical for farmers to sell their property to developers than to farm it. Lately, we've been hunting more on state game lands. The dogs are helping us get more shooting, but the problem with state game lands is that they often attract more hunters. At times these areas are saturated with hunters and their dogs.

As the 4-week season came to a close, the crew managed to get together every Saturday. We had moderate success, taking 17 pheasants and 22 rabbits.

Those involved with the Beast Feast have been friends for more than 25 years. Lasting friendships are often lost, and many friends and precious moments are often relegated to memories only. We have been able to avoid those pitfalls that separate friends. Time is a precious commodity. A fleeting treasure that takes our lives from young to old with a snap of the finger. For 25 years the Beast Feast is not only a culmination of our hunting and fishing efforts, but is also a celebration of our friendship. A hearty congratulations to Hooty, Nut, Pigged, Hogged, Ali Oop, Big Bean Peach, Johnny, Rick, Trolly, Terby, Mikey and Frank. Also the women's auxiliary, which includes Jamie, Eileen and Michelle. Finally, I'm looking forward to hunting with the newest members of our crew — the German shorthair pointers Kaiser, Rommel and Heidi. It's quite evident they will become our biggest contributors. We have forged a tradition that will last the rest of our lives. May the 25th annual Beast Feast be a resounding success. □

Pennsylvania's Turkey Rebound

By Bob Frye

PHEASANTS. That's what Bill Drake hunted as a teenager growing up in southwestern Pennsylvania a few decades ago. Of course, that wasn't unusual. Everyone hunted pheasants in those days. In fact, small game, and especially farmland small game, was the thing to hunt. The game was plentiful, the action was often fast, and there was plenty of land to hunt.

Turkeys were another story, though. "I grew up in Westmoreland County, and I never thought I'd see a turkey there," recalls Drake, the recently retired Game Commission turkey biologist. "We did a lot of pheasant hunting, but nobody hunted turkeys. There just weren't any around in those days."

Oh, how times have changed. Turkeys roam every corner of the state today and, by all indications, are doing better than ever. Harvest figures have been spiraling upward for years — hunters took more than 30,000 birds each fall from 1993 to 1998. In fact, as of the proposal approved at the January 2000 Game Commission meeting, the entire state is slated for a fall season of at least three days this year. The fact that the state's turkeys are doing as well as they are today is no accident. Aggressive management and strict protection, combined with a changing landscape, have all played an important part in restoring wild turkeys.

The outlook for Pennsylvania's turkeys was not always so bright, though. Around the turn of the century and even after, the complete loss of turkeys from Pennsylvania was a real possibility. New York did lose its native turkey population. "We didn't lose them completely, but we came close," Drake says. "At the turn of the century there was just a remnant population in the mountains of southcentral Pennsylvania."

The large-scale loss of habitat was a major reason for the turkey's near demise. Massive logging operations combined with fires wiped out big pieces of woodlands, leaving nowhere for turkeys to live. The single factor undoubtedly most responsible for nearly wiping out the state's turkey population, however, Drake says, was overhunting. "You could shoot them year-round, and there was a lot of market hunting," Drake says. "If you saw them, and had the time or inclination, you shot them.



ROCKET NETS revolutionized trapping turkeys for the trap-and-transfer program. The program has been a remarkable success in spreading naturally reproducing flocks across the state.

"My great grandfather used to get 50 cents a turkey for every one he sold. He'd finish farm chores then go out and shoot a turkey and take it into town. You have to remember, these people were hard working, and they hunted as hard as they worked. Their feeling was you'd shoot the turkeys and they'd just come back. But they didn't, just like the mountain lion, buffalo and passenger pigeon. Turkeys were taking a beating," Drake says.



AFTER CAUGHT in the rocket net, turkeys were put in cardboard boxes and transferred to another area with suitable habitat. The trap-and-transfer program sped up what was happening naturally with turkey range expansion.

It wasn't until the late 1800s that the first season was established for Pennsylvania turkeys, and even it didn't go far enough. "They never closed the season entirely. They should have, but they didn't," Drake says. It was even later until bag limits were established and hunting during the breeding season was restricted, and then hunting was prohibited at any time other than the fall.

By then, though, Pennsylvania's turkeys were in trouble. Things didn't begin to improve until three factors came into play. One was the establishment of turkey seasons and the strict enforcement of them. Another was the changing nature of the state's farms and forests, and the third was a change in the way the Game Commission managed turkeys.

In terms of land use, the large-scale logging that had hurt turkeys around the turn of the century was helping them by the 1940s and '50s. Those forests were regenerating into second growth timber, providing turkeys with perfect habitat. At the same time, changes in agricultural land use practices were benefiting turkeys as well, Drake says. "Agriculture was declining, old farms were reverting and what was left was being intensively managed. That was bad for pheasants but good for turkeys," Drake says. "When the farmers were mowing the heck out of hay they were mowing pheasant nests, but turkeys were in the woodlots doing fine."

The fact that turkeys did so well in such habitat was a bit of a surprise, Drake says. In the 1930s and '40s, the thinking was that turkeys needed large tracts of woods and seclusion to thrive. The fact that turkeys started to rebound at the same time the landscape was changing to include a variety of habitats was an eye opener. While forested tracts remain the backbone of turkey habitat, biologists now know turkeys prefer fragmented habitat that also contains active agriculture and reverting farmland and strip mines.

"There's no universal agreement on what makes the best turkey habitat," Drake says, "but in my opinion it's about 50 to 70 percent forest, so the birds have somewhere to roost, feed and get shelter in winter, with the rest being agricultural land and reverting farmland."

Turkeys really began to take advantage of the new habitat available to them in the 1940s and '50s. Biologists began to see an increase in the number of birds in the southcentral part of the state, where

Pennsylvania's last flocks had been. Those birds began expanding their range northward, dispersing into new territories. "With legal protection, and increasing habitat suitable for them, they took advantage of it and moved on their own," Drake says.

The PGC tried for decades to boost those birds by stocking farm-raised turkeys around the state. That program, well intentioned and popular from the 1930s through 1980, was "extremely misguided," Drake says. More than 200,000 turkeys were released from the agency's game farm, with the effort being unsuccessful all the way around.

"Those birds just didn't work out at all," recalls Rod Ansell, today a Westmoreland County WCO. Assigned to Greene County when he was stocking turkeys, Ansell says the birds never took hold and offered little sport. "We'd stock them and by the next day they'd be on roofs of houses, barns and outbuildings. They went right to people. They were like big chickens."

A development that was to change the way the PGC looked at turkey expansion occurred in the Carolinas in the 1960s. Wildlife biologists there, looking to help expand their turkey flocks, developed the practice of trapping and transferring wild turkeys. Biologists used a large net, 40- by 60-feet, in a box that was camouflaged and placed just behind a baited area. The front end of the net was connected to three rockets, and the trailing end was weighted to the ground. Electric lines ran from one end to howitzer-powder charges connected to the rockets at the other, and were controlled by a person hiding in a blind. When a flock of turkeys congregated around the bait, the person in the blind touched the electric lines to a battery, setting off the rockets and firing the net over the birds. The turkeys were then collected, put in boxes and transferred to other areas with suitable habitat.

The PGC adopted the tactic and trapped and transferred wild turkeys into the 1990s. The program has been a remarkable success. The birds trapped and moved to new locations thrived, spreading wild, naturally reproducing flocks across the state in a fraction of the time it would have taken for natural dispersion to do the job.

"The population of trap and transfer birds exploded," Drake says. "Rocket netting allowed us to get our hands on a fair amount of wild birds, and then basically we were able to do what the birds were doing themselves in the 1940s and '50s, which was expand their range into suitable habitat. The only difference is that instead of waiting 30 to 40 years for the birds to move on their own, we were able to put them in a vehicle and drive them there. We sped up what was happening naturally."

In the beginning, trap and transfer birds were moved no farther than the edges of areas where breeding populations of birds already existed on their own. In time, though, turkeys were moved into areas of suitable but unoccupied habitat. All flourished.

"I can remember back in the 1970s, you'd talk to people who said they saw a few turkeys, but then they'd disappear and that was it," Ansell remembers of his time in Greene County. "That was how things were. Once we did the trap and transfer, though, the turkey population just exploded."

Drake credits the PGC's executive office with making the trap and transfer program possible. There was always some opposition to the program, based on shortsighted greed from those who hated the idea of some of their local flocks being transferred to other parts of the state. The PGC stood firm in its support of the program, though, because people were able to look to the future and see a day when Pennsylvania would have turkeys statewide.

"The executive office always hung tough and supported us because we

were producing, we were getting results, we were establishing populations. The executive office realized that the benefits outweighed the negatives, so they were willing to withstand the pressure," Drake recalls.

Worries that trapping and transferring was negatively impacting local flocks were always unfounded, anyway, Drake says. Biologists just can't trap enough birds to impact a flock long-term, and the flocks they did target were most often those causing crop damage on private property.

Watch for Shirley Grenoble's history of turkey hunting article, "Spring Gobbler Hunting — 30 Years Later" in next month's issue.

Today, the benefits of the trap and transfer program can be seen everywhere. "We're at an historic high," Drake says of the turkey population, and the numbers seem to bear him out. Harvest statistics have been spiraling upward since the 1920s, with each succeeding decade's harvest total higher than the previous one. Hunters bagged 34,972 birds from 1920 through 1929. Compare that to 1995, when hunters took 36,401 gobblers in the spring season alone. That was a new state record spring harvest. The fall season was equally impressive that year, when hunters bagged 49,748 birds to set a fall harvest record.

Areas of the state once thought to offer marginal turkey habitat, such as the Southwest Region, have experienced some of the biggest jumps in turkey numbers.

WCO John Smith in southern Somerset County, for example, says turkeys have boomed there in recent decades. "Turkeys are just absolutely everywhere. That's the way it is all over southwestern Pennsylvania."

Drake is reluctant to say exactly how many turkeys are out there now. The fact that harvest trends have been climbing since the 1920s leads biologists to assume the total population has been climbing as well. The key to maintaining a high number of turkeys is to control hunting pressure. "I think the harvest and the number of birds is stable," Drake says. "Our future progress depends on protecting the existing population and protecting the breeding segment of that population most of all. We can do that by regulating the hunting mortality of those hens, mostly in the fall by regulating the length of the season."

Drake compares the spring season on turkeys to the buck season. The harvesting of males is not that critical, he says, provided it comes after the breeding season. Just like the deer population is managed by controlling the harvesting of does, the turkey population is managed by controlling the harvesting of hens.

Decisions on changing turkey hunting seasons — whether it be lengthening the fall season in a particular management area or allowing a two-bird limit in the spring — will have to be made based on how they'll impact overall turkey numbers. "It's a case of maximizing recreation versus maximizing populations. It's a balancing act," Drake says. "The good news is that the 'good old days' of Pennsylvania turkey hunting are right now, and if we do our job right, the future looks pretty good. There's still room for expansion. I don't know how much because we're at record levels right now, but I think we can do even better. If we're not too liberal with our fall harvest, I think we can have more turkeys than we have now. The potential is there, but quality of habitat is the key."

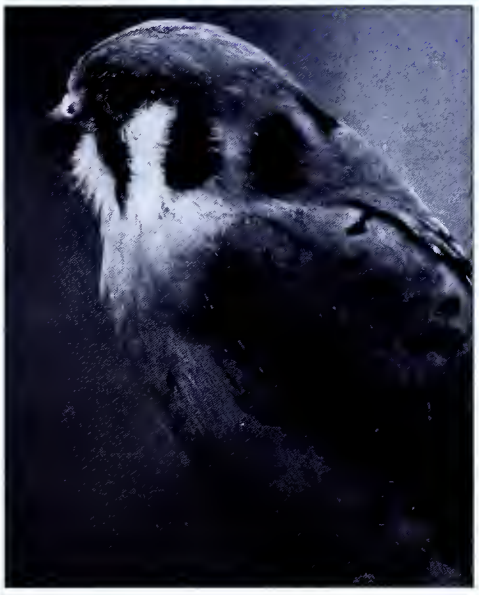
Time has been good to Pennsylvania's turkeys so far. I hope it's a trend that continues for the next generation. □

Small Bird, Big Effort

By Marcus H. Schneck

ABOUT THE SIZE of a blue jay, the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) is the smallest falcon in Pennsylvania. The tiny raptor, so familiar on roadside utility lines throughout the commonwealth, has long attracted the attention of biologists at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, near Kempton.

Kestrels have been the focus of research and conservation efforts on and near Hawk Mountain since the early 1950s, when former curator Alex Nagy first put up a dozen boxes for nesting kestrels on his father's farm in the Kempton Valley below the mountain. Kestrels, which do not build their own nests but instead use natural tree cavities, readily adapt to artificial nestboxes placed in suitable habitat.



Kestrels, once called sparrow hawks, are birds of open spaces, including grasslands, farmlands, suburban and even urban areas, savannas and deserts. Although food for the small raptor — insects, lizards, mice and small birds, often hunted from roadside utility lines — has remained plentiful in suburban and rural housing developments, the number of available natural nesting cavities has decreased at an astonishing rate. The bird currently faces a scarcity of nesting sites, as more and more trees and snags are removed from the landscape.

Today, through the cooperation of private landowners, more than 200 nestboxes are scattered across 500 square miles of farmland surrounding the sanctuary in Berks, Lehigh and Schuylkill counties. Between 48 and 79 pairs of kestrels use the boxes each year. And, in the past three years, the nestbox count — and the kestrels using them to raise their young — has continued to climb. Last spring, kestrels using Hawk Mountain nestboxes produced 272 nestlings, up significantly from the 198 nestlings in 1998 and the 197 produced in 1997.

"The boxes have been extremely successful in boosting local kestrel populations," said Keith Bildstein, director of research and education at Hawk Mountain. To illustrate the birds' resilience to change in their environments, Bildstein tells the story of two radio-tracked kestrels that paired last spring. At about the time the female was showing signs that she would soon lay eggs, the nestbox tree she showed her mate was cut down and the nestbox was removed. Hawk Mountain volunteers quickly erected a new box on a pole a few hundred yards from the felled tree. The pair adopted the new cavity within two weeks and fledged four youngsters by late June.

The region around the sanctuary has become something of a kestrel

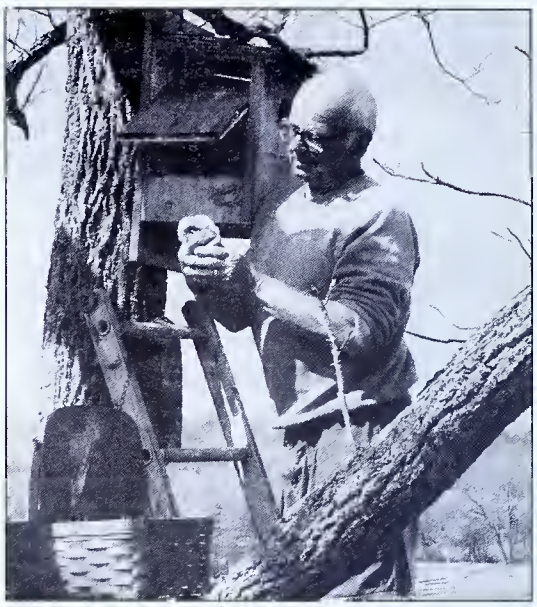
nursery. For Hawk Mountain, home of the longest record of raptor migration in the world, an abundance of nesting birds of prey also offers a field laboratory that sanctuary biologists, as well as visiting scientists and graduate students, can use to learn more about the birds.

The resulting 30-year stream of basic data, including average laying dates, nestbox use and fledging success, is the critical and ongoing starting point for this long-term study. Every spring, the nestboxes are inspected carefully, nestlings are counted and sexed, and the overall reproductive success of the kestrel population is calculated. Scientists band almost all kestrels in their study area, including each year's fledglings. Color banding allows researchers to subsequently identify the birds without retrapping them. "Most of the fieldwork rests on the shoulders of our citizen scientists (volunteers) and interns," acknowledges Bildstein, who credits their enthusiasm as a factor in the program's many successes.

Information gathered by Hawk Mountain kestrel researchers — such as the interesting fact that in the drought of 1999, nest productivity climbed to 3.02 fledglings per nest from the 2.08 per nest in the previous, wet spring — is eagerly awaited by biologists and conservationists throughout the United States and Canada.

As part of the Hawk Mountain study, the daily lives of wintering kestrels have been tracked, using tiny 3-gram radio transmitters. Since 1997, nearly two dozen birds have been followed, yielding insights into the biology and ecology of the kestrel.

When sanctuary biologists noticed that a lot of their radio-equipped kestrels fell prey to larger raptors — particularly Cooper's hawks — they



VOLUNTEER Bob Robertson removes a kestrel chick from a nestbox at Hawk Mountain for a check-up and banding.

began looking at Christmas Bird Counts of both species throughout the northeastern United States. Preliminary findings suggest that where populations of Cooper's hawks are increasing, recovering from DDT-era lows, kestrel populations are declining.

Graduate students from universities in both Pennsylvania and elsewhere have focused their research on Hawk Mountain kestrels to look at the dynamics of territory selection, and the relationship between brightness of plumage, physical condition and reproductive success. One study found that the larger female kestrels tended to occupy the preferred (more open) habitat, while the smaller male kestrels were found more frequently in fallow fields in succession, where predation was a greater risk. Another study found that plumage brightness is indicative of older and more experienced males, and furthermore, that females prefer these brighter plumed males as mates.

A cooperative study conducted with collaborators at sites in New Jersey, Idaho, Utah, Saskatchewan, Georgia and Florida, determined that male kestrels in the southeastern U.S. have fewer black bars on the

feathers of their backs than did their more northerly counterparts. This was an important finding because barring is frequently used as a criterion for researchers to age male kestrels.

To increase support for some of its kestrel work, several years ago Hawk Mountain initiated an Adopt-a-Kestrel-Nestbox program, through which donors can adopt a nestbox and receive benefits, including a report of nesting activity at their box, a summary of the year's reproductive success and an invitation to an annual field trip to band nestlings.

Based on that program, the Sanctuary's Adopt-a-Kestrel-Nestbox for Pennsylvania School Children in the Classroom was launched in 1997, developed with funding from the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The program offers an 8-page brochure, "Nestboxes for American Kestrels," which describes the biology and ecology of the birds, shows teachers and group leaders how to build and erect nestboxes, and provides instructions for monitoring kestrel activity at boxes.

"By placing and observing a kestrel nestbox in suitable habitat, students can learn valuable lessons in wildlife ecology," explained Bildstein. "The kestrel can be used to introduce students to the ecology of predatory birds, wildlife management and monitoring, the use of birds as bioindicators of ecosystem health, and the dangers of invasive species. Because kestrels are near the top of the food chain, they are excellent bioindicators of ecosystem health, helping us learn how our farmland habitats function."

The education staff of Hawk Mountain has held several workshops to show teachers and youth leaders how to incorporate the program into their curriculum.

For free kestrel nestbox plans, send a stamped (55 cents) self-addressed, 9x12 envelope to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Adopt a Kestrel Nestbox Program, 1700 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA 19529 or send a request for "Woodcrafting for Wildlife" (cost:$6) to Pennsylvania Game Commission, Department MS, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110. The American Kestrel Video is available for $20 (includes shipping) from the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, 1700 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, Pa 19529-9449 or Wildlife Resource Conservation Fund, Box 8764 Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764.

This past summer, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund and the sanctuary teamed up to produce a 14-minute video, "American Kestrel: Finding a Home." The new video takes viewers inside a nestbox to witness the family life of kestrels that few have ever seen. Footage includes parents on their hunting flights, and youngsters being cared for inside the safety of the nestbox for the first time. It also leads viewers step-by-step through the easy process of making a nestbox and erecting it in suitable habitat.

More recently, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary commissioned wildlife artist Bob Sopchick, whose kestrel artwork graces the cover of this *Game News*, to design an American kestrel poster. Funds for this poster were provided by the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association.

The Hawk Mountain formula of more nestboxes equals more kestrels is spreading. Cavity-deprived fields and suburban developments await. □

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

THE POTATO FIRES

Bob Sopchick



FRANK SELECTED a half-dozen large potatoes from the bin in the root cellar, slipped them into the game pouch of his canvas coat, then went upstairs to the kitchen. He poured salt and pepper onto a torn corner of newspaper, folded it several times, and put it in a pocket along with two kitchen matches. His mother was sitting next to the woodstove, like she did every evening, reading and drinking her tea, waiting for his father to return home from the second shift at the rail yard.

"Where you going, Frankie?"

"Out back to make a fire. I'll have a baked potato for Pop when he gets home. Want me to bring one for you?"

"No thanks, that's too late for me to eat anything. You go on now." Their yellow dog whined and circled at the door. "Look there, Lucky's waitin' on you."

Frank stood on the porch, inhaling the sweet March air, and watched his dog lope across the yard, resembling a small, pale wolf in the brilliant moonlight. It had been a snowy winter, and he could hear freshets of water rushing down the mountain, along with the scattered choruses of spring peepers. The lonely whistle of a train rounding the curve in the river valley signaled that it was 9 o'clock. From the shed he took a garden spade and an old hubcap with a chain attached. At the edge of the field he dug a shallow pit, then from the woodshed brought over a sling of kindling and cord wood. He put the hubcap in the pit and laid a latticed framework of wood on it, placed the potatoes in the spaces between, then stacked on more wood. In a few minutes flames danced and crackled.

Frank heard his best friend Lewis before he saw him, Lewis's bad leg scuffing along in the leaves. "Figures you'd show up when all the work's done," Frank said.

"You got room for these?" Lewis produced a pair of small, rubbery potatoes, the eyes grown long like tentacles on some primitive ocean creature. Frank laughed at the sorry looking spuds, tossed one to Lucky who mouthed it and quickly dropped it, and threw the other into the hedgerow, which the dog retrieved and dropped next to the first.

"We're at the bottom of the bin this time of year."

"That's okay. I got an extra one already in there for you."

Now in their junior year of high school, they had been friends since childhood, as much out of necessity than anything, theirs being the last houses on the long dead end road that led out of town. Lewis had been stricken by polio when he was a child, but with an iron will and Frank's encouragement, he overcame great odds. Lewis was a star in the classroom, leaps and bounds beyond the others. He especially loved geography and history, with a wanderlust that blossomed from reading about exotic lands while

bedridden for months on end. He vowed to travel the world someday, but for now the focus of their lives was hunting in the wooded hills that rose not far from their back doors.

From out of the shadows came a large hound — deep chested and ghostly, sucking in air through flared nostrils — followed by a stranger about their age.

Lucky charged over to the big hound, roaring savagely, then pulled up short. A polite sniffing. "Mind now, Lucky," Frank yelled.

"Easy, Race," the stranger said. "Didn't mean to bother ya. Thought he was gonna whoop your dog, so I come over."

"Don't kid yourself, pal. You ought to see what he does to the groundhogs he catches in our garden. Where you from?"

"Up over the mountain. The big farm on Hornbeck Road. I'm Tim. I seen you two settin' for squirrel a couple times up on the hill last fall."

"Is that a coon dog?" Lewis asked.

"He's a champion bluetick hound. Cost me a whole season's fur money to buy him and his sister, Pearl. She's at home. I feed 'em only canned food. Mom's against it because it's expensive, but I pay for it with trapline coin. I tell her you can't feed table slops to pedigreed hounds. They got papers."

"Lucky used to have papers, too," Frank said, "but he's housebroken now."

Lewis laughed so hard he almost fell off the log.

"I heard your dogs and a horn late one night," Frank said.

"That's how I call my hounds," explained Tim. "I hunt your side of the hill sometimes."

"How come we never saw you up in the woods?" Lewis asked.

"I didn't want to ruin your watch. Besides, I was after deer."

"Deer? There ain't no deer on this hill."

"There's deer all right. Ever since that big burn on top grew back."



Frank poked the flames with a stick. "What are you doing huntin' deer in October?"

"I was huntin' with my bow. They started archery season a couple years ago, in '51. I made the bow myself."

They added more wood and talked for an hour. An occasional loud pop shifted the subject or cued the next hunter to start a new story where another left off, in the way fires have always done. The addition of the third party elevated their previous exploits in the woods from mere experiences to tribal legend, a shared archive of standards by which all other things could now be measured and added to, unwritten tenets never to be forgotten. A sudden, cold wind swept in from the west and enveloped them in a gauzy veil of delicious apple smoke, an incense that this night would bind these young hunters for the rest of their lives.

Frank pulled the hubcap out of the fire by the chain. "Help yourself boys." He speared a potato and ran it down to the house for his father, sliced off a slab of butter from a dish and returned to the fire.

They passed around the gob of butter and square of salt and pepper. They ate in silence with their penknives, the two friends impressed with the ridgerunner and his

hound, and he with their woods savvy. They stared deep into the fire, studying the flickering coals as if examining the sparking synapses of their own brains.

"I'll meet you here at lunchtime tomorrow," Tim said. "I'll show you where the deer are."

"You're on," Frank said. "You want these last two potatoes?"

Tim took them and put them in the pockets of his thin jacket. "I got a long way to go, they'll keep my hands warm until I get home."

It had snowed during the night, most of which melted on the ground but clung to branches, what was often called an onion snow. They headed up through the crabapple woods, up through the maple glade, up past the oak grove to the high side of the regenerated burn where the snow lay two inches deep. Tim showed them a line of buck rubs, something they had never seen before. They slipped into the thicket on a narrow deer trail pocked with the unmistakable tracks and droppings, and followed it to the fresh beds of five deer that bounded out from the far edge of the thicket. Their hearts raced after they heard a distant snort and then saw white flags bobbing over the ridgeline. "There you go," Tim whispered. "There's your deer."

That spring Tim helped them build longbows of osage orange, just like his own. They assembled cedar arrows with turkey feather fletching, each hunter with a different color banded crest; Frank's red, yellow for Lewis, Tim's blue. Throughout the summer they practiced on paper targets and stalked groundhogs and took difficult shots at rotten stumps in the woods. By autumn they were keen for the hunt.

October waned without a deer being sighted by anyone, and on the last day they decided to put on a slow silent drive through the burn. They waited for Lewis to post off a deer trail on the opposite side before they still-hunted towards him. Just as they were about to begin their push, they heard Lewis whooping and hollering like a wild man, and a few minutes later three does bolted out of the burn, followed by a craggy buck that hesitated not a dozen yards away. With an instinct born of many hours on the practice range, Frank and Tim drew in unison and loosed their shafts. The heavy arrows with razor-sharp broadheads zipped through the buck's lungs inches apart, and the deer went down a short distance away.

Lewis came crashing through the burn and when he saw them with their buck he started whooping and hollering again, and they joined in. They yelled and hooted even louder after Lewis settled down and told them that as soon as he had taken his stand five deer walked into the burn, two of them bucks, and he dropped a forkhorn with a shot in the spine. Frank and Tim graciously insisted that the other tag the big 8-point, Lewis finally settling it with a coin toss. Tim reluctantly tagged it.



Word spread quickly about their feat and curious people stopped by, including a reporter from the newspaper. The lead line on Monday's sports page read "Young Archers Score Big on Bucks," with a photo of the trio and their homemade bows and the deer. Lewis was especially excited, because their article got top billing over the high school football team's victory. The fare at that week's fire included venison backstrap,



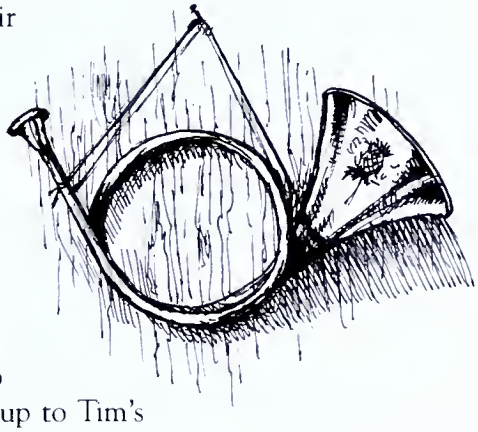
with plenty of scraps for Lucky and the hounds, Tim saying how there was nothing they could put in a can of dog food that could touch fresh venison. The debate on whose arrow struck the buck first continued on and fueled other fires for decades.

That fall they hunted coons with Tim and his hounds, and the hills rang with their sweet music. At times Lewis struggled to keep up, but he always managed to get to the treed coon and make the shot while Frank held the light and Tim the dogs.

Tim had a masterful touch with dogs, and trained Lucky to be a fine squirrel dog and rabbit rouster. Tim recognized something special in the yellow dog, an ancient intelligence more pronounced than the pedigreed hounds. That fall and into the winter many potato fires burned, the long shadows of the hunters and their dogs stretching out into the darkness, blurring like spokes on a moving wheel with a molten hub — and that flaming wheel of youth rolled quickly on.

Frank became a railroad engineer and loved bringing the locomotives home down through the river valley. Tim ran a hardware store, then opened the first sporting goods store with an archery shop in the region. He also raised champion hounds, but for a long time his companion dog was a yellow dog named Spud.

Frank and Tim raised their families in the same houses they grew up in, and built a hunting camp up north. Lewis went on to get a Ph.D. in anthropology, wrote many books and taught at an Ivy League school. He traveled the world as he said he would, and they saw his picture in *National Geographic*. He sent them birdshooting gloves from Spain that could turn any briar, an antique silver hunting horn from Scotland engraved with thistles, exotic ocean shells for their kids, Japanese kimonos for their wives. He always closed his letters with "keep the home fires burning."



Frank wrapped two potatoes in aluminum foil, went out back and placed them in the fire. He saw Lewis's bent form scraping along in the autumn leaves before he heard him, having lost much of his hearing after a lifetime of running the big locomotives. The white-haired, bearded professor and the retired train engineer talked until the fire died down. Frank shoveled dirt onto the last blue ember, then they drove in silence up to Tim's farm. Tim's family filed from the bedroom where he lay pale and dying. In a raspy and labored voice Tim said that he could smell woodsmoke on them, and Lewis told him about the fire, almost like old times, but not the same without him there.

Tim motioned Frank to move close so he could hear. "Was your arrow, Frank. Was your arrow got there first. That was your buck. I get the last word on that."

Frank took the potatoes from his pocket and placed one in each of Tim's cold hands. "Here you go, we didn't forget about you."

"These will keep me warm," said Tim, "until I get home."

FIELD NOTES

Heartfelt Thank You

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was on field training assignment in Franklin County when I received a call from my wife that my father had passed away. The support offered to me from Game Commission staff was unbelievable. I received countless cards and letters from agency people that I didn't even know. Nothing can replace a loved one, but with "family" like this, it sure eases the pain.

— TRAINEE MATTHEW M. GREBECK, HARRISBURG

Blendin' In

ELK — Rick Zellehoski knew he was well hidden from the prying eyes of the deer while hunting during the muzzleloader season, but he didn't realize just how well until a turkey flushed from an opposite hillside and tried to land on his gun barrel.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Says it All

On a hunting trip to South Dakota last fall, I was impressed by the message on a large billboard on Interstate 90. It read, "We South Dakotans Reject All Animal Rights Activists. Our Economy Is Based On Hunting, Trapping And Livestock."

— LMO CLIFFORD GUINDON, BOSWELL

SPORT

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field training assignment I was impressed with the large number of sportsmen who came forward to report game law violations. Without these concerned individuals, many poaching cases would go unsolved. A special thank you to all who were willing to get involved.

— TRAINEE PETER F. SUSSENBACH, HARRISBURG

Successful Team

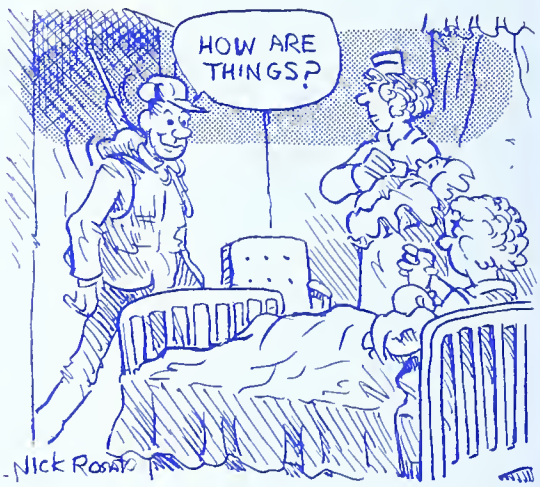
FULTON — While patrolling the Buchanan State Forest during archery season, I met Paul Flora, 73, and wife, Virginia, 69, from Shippensburg. Virginia had a nice 6-point and Paul a doe. I encountered both hunters the following week and checked a doe that Virginia had taken.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Jumpin' for Joy

PERRY — Who will be happier than the WCO trainees on their graduation day? Me! After a second year of covering two districts during the hunting seasons, I can't wait for graduation day.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE



Dedicated

BUCKS — One hunter was late in registering for the controlled deer hunt at Tyler State Park in Bucks County. It seems his wife had delivered twins earlier in the morning. Even though he got a late start, he bagged a deer and then headed back to the hospital to visit his wife and twins. Congratulations on your "triple trophy."

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM, NEW BRITAIN

Many Benefits

MONTGOMERY — Members of the local Trout Unlimited chapter told me how they really appreciate the Game Commission's streambank fencing program. The program helps not only many species of wildlife, it also helps fish by cutting down on run-off and pollution.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Perceptive?

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was working with a deer decoy to deter road hunters on the last day of buck season when two hunters came walking out of the woods near the fascimile. Not wanting them to shoot the deer, I approached to let them know that the decoy was there. A mere 15 yards from the deer, they commented that they hadn't seen a deer all day. I didn't even bother to tell them about the decoy; I just wished them luck and let them go their way.

— TRAINEE ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HARRISBURG

True Sportsmen

MERCER — This past hunting season provided several examples that restored my faith in people. Honesty has always been the best policy, and for sportsmen to be honest and accept responsibility for their actions is part of hunter ethics. Accepting your responsibility sometimes comes with consequences (restitution or fines), but it also brings a clear conscience and peace of mind. Persons reporting having killed game by mistake serve as models of hunter ethics and responsibility. This in turn speaks volumes for their character in general.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Might be a Sign

CLEARFIELD — My deputies and I were searching for bait placed out for bears near a camp when Deputy Anstead called me on the portable radio and said, "I know there's bait around here somewhere, a crow just flew over carrying a doughnut."

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD



Hectic Pace

TRAINING SCHOOL — During field training I tranquilized a bear, trapped a beaver, did a radio program, talked to sportsmens' groups, stocked pheasants, picked up roadkilled deer, worked with bobcats, worked a bear check station and worked on game law violation cases — all this in just 10 weeks. Just think about what a WCO does in the course of a year.

— TRAINEE HAROLD MALEHORN, HARRISBURG

It Figures

I met a hunter who could only smile and shake his head in amazement when on the first day of antlerless deer season I asked him if he had seen any. "Only four," he said. "But all four were wearing antlers."

— LMO KEITH P. SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE

He Didn't

Despite explaining to Bob D'Angelo that mergansers weren't the best eating ducks in the world, he insisted on bagging one that kept buzzing the decoys while hunting on the Susquehanna River. When he asked about the best way to prepare one, I told him to slice the breast up real nice, marinate it in Italian dressing, place it on a well-heated grill, then get rid of the duck and eat the grill. Just kidding. I told him once the merganser breast was marinated, he might even enjoy it.

— HTE DIVISION CHIEF KEITH SNYDER, HARRISBURG



"Orange Camo?"

SUSQUEHANNA — I noticed a highly visible squirrel nest on a game lands here. The handy squirrel had used fluorescent orange surveyor's ribbon to completely encircle the nest.

— WCO DONALD R. BURCHELL, NEW MILFORD

Good Deed, Indeed

I would like to thank Clarence Robson and Rosemarie Bock of Johnstown for their honesty. They were hunting on SGL 42 near Laughlintown when they noticed that two hunters had left their rifles on the ground after loading their deer into a pickup truck and leaving. Clarence and Rosemarie took the rifles to the Game Commission Southwest Region Office, after leaving a note for the hunters to come to our office to claim their property. Several hours later the two hunters appeared at the office to claim their firearms.

— WES JOSEPH V. STEFKO, LIGONIER

Absence Makes Heart Grow Fonder

FRANKLIN — WCO Steve Leiendecker and I were discussing how busy it was during the hunting seasons, and of how much time we had spent away from home. I asked Steve how his wife handled his first hunting season as a WCO and he said, "I don't know. When I finally see her, I'll ask."

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, SAINT THOMAS

Oops!

ADAMS — I was talking to a group of hunters in an area where we had been receiving reports about treestands being damaged when one of the hunters blurted out that someone had stolen his treestand, salt block and apples. Realizing what he had said, he quickly corrected himself by saying the incident had occurred the previous summer.

— WCO LARRY HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Just a Myth

JEFFERSON — On the last day of doe season Trainee William Williams and I noticed three hunters dragging a doe along a stream bottom, which paralleled the road. Williams jumped out of the vehicle, walked down over a steep bank, and then waded through two feet of water to check the deer. Meeting up with him a couple of minutes later, I pointed out a couple training observations. One, he was wet and I wasn't, and two, despite what he may have heard, WCO's can't walk on water.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

It's the Truth

CHESTER — During deer season I'm sometimes asked, "Where are all the deer?" Funny, though, how it's always the hunter sitting in his vehicle, drinking coffee at 8 o'clock in the morning, asking the question.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, GLENMOORE

Some Navigator

TRAINING SCHOOL — While riding with WCO Randy Shoup in Monroe County, I was directing him to our destination from a roadmap when I told him to take a shortcut and make a quick right turn on a grassy road up ahead. Randy commented that the road was awful steep about the same time I noticed the chair ski lift. After we made it safely to the bottom, I told Randy that I was sure glad we were on a beginner's slope.

— TRAINEE GARY M. FUJAK, HARRISBURG

Common Sense

CLARION — A bear was hit by a vehicle here last winter, and while trying to make its way into the woods, several people brought their children right up to the injured animal to pet it. This was an adult male bear weighing more than 200 pounds and in pain and frightened. Some people just never know how lucky they are.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Not What it Seems

YORK — I've always heard that on "bluebird" days waterfowl hunting is poor. It wasn't until one day last winter, though, that I found out what a bluebird day really is. WCO Greg Houghton and I were hunting ducks, and it was a warm but rainy day with a forecast of more rain. It looked like a perfect duck hunting day. By 10 a.m., though, we had seen only one duck. We discovered our problem, however, when Greg pointed out a half-dozen bluebirds in a tree at the edge of the pond.

—WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION



Ringin' Off the Hook

BRADFORD — In a one-hour period my wife received phone calls about an emu running loose, a boa constrictor, an injured "black web-footed bill duck," a mess of skunks and, finally, a question on where the pheasants were stocked.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



Ouch!

BEDFORD — I needed to obtain information from a hunter in a hospital here who had shot himself in the foot during the antlerless deer season when his rifle incidentally discharged. He told me his granddaughter had said, "It's doe season, Grandpa, not toe season."

— WCO TIMOTHY C. FLANIGAN, BEDFORD

Where's the Example?

TRAINING SCHOOL — While assigned to field training in Wayne County on the first Saturday of buck season, my training WCO and I dealt with three major violations — all involving deer taken illegally. The most disturbing thing, though, was that all three violations were committed by junior hunters who were with a parent or guardian.

— TRAINEE DARREN DAVID, HARRISBURG

First Deer on the Left

BLAIR — I was instructed to call Ernie Stump of Hollidaysburg about a deer he had hit with his vehicle. When I asked if he had damaged his car, he said that he had totaled his personal vehicle the week before by hitting a deer, and that this incident had damaged a rental car he was driving. When I asked how I could locate his house, he said to look for the deer lawn ornament decorated with Christmas lights.

— DEPUTY GERALD STOMBAUGH, HOLLIDAYSBURG



Launching Pad

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was helping WCO Bob Johnson stock pheasants in Pike County last fall and all was going well until one hen didn't want to leave the crate. The bird had its back to me but then turned and flushed directly into my face. The pheasant righted itself on top of my head, sat there a few seconds, then took off. Without even turning around, I could hear the chuckles of Bob and the Food and Cover Corps guys.

— TRAINEE JONATHAN M. WYANT, HARRISBURG

Close Encounter

TRAINING SCHOOL — Matamoras taxidermist Dave Clark showed me a deer skull and antlers from a buck, killed by a hunter, that had apparently been attacked by a coyote or dog. Several broken off canine teeth were embedded in the skull, and the deer's ears had been torn. I wonder what the coyote or dog looked like after the struggle?

— TRAINEE WES STAUFFER, HARRISBURG

Mystery

TRAINING SCHOOL — Recently, I noticed a tundra swan flying second in a formation of Canada geese. When asked why the swan was with the geese, I answered the way my children do when asked a difficult question: "just because."

— TRAINEE DUSTIN M. STONER, HARRISBURG

Double Trouble

CLINTON — I cited a man for shooting at a deer with his bow while standing on a road immediately after alighting from his vehicle. Two months later, I caught the man shooting his flintlock rifle at a deer decoy from inside of his truck at the same exact spot. Lightning might not strike twice in the same place, but we sure do.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Bargain

TRAINING SCHOOL — I checked several hunters from Ohio who emphatically said that our $101 nonresident license fee is a great deal. The abundance of game and the land open to public hunting is hard to beat. In fact, they said they don't even bother to purchase resident Ohio licenses.

— TRAINEE BRIAN E. WITHERITE, HARRISBURG

Payback?

BEDFORD — One day during a heavy downpour, Trainee Gary Fujak and I came upon a traffic accident. We stopped to assist, but because Gary had forgotten his rain gear I lent him mine, so he could direct traffic while I jumped back into the truck. We had a sportsmen's club meeting later that night, and when I jumped into the passenger side of my truck the seat of my pants quickly became soaked. It seems that Gary had left the window down earlier during the day. Now, I'm wondering if he did that intentionally after I made him stand out in the rain.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Unbelievable

WES Joe Stefko and I (both in full uniform and in a marked Game Commission vehicle) were parked near our deer decoy used to deter road hunting when a vehicle drove by and stopped. Incredibly, the occupants waved to us, then drove up to the decoy and shot at it.

— LMO GEORGE MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Enhanced deer hunting opportunities highlight 2000-01 seasons and bag proposals

AT ITS January meeting, the Game Commission proposed 2000-01 seasons and bag limits that include many changes designed to provide more deer hunting opportunities and better control of the deer herd.

These proposed seasons and bag limits must receive approval at the Commission's April meeting in order to be finalized.

"The changes in deer seasons and bag limits will help stabilize our deer resource while we can begin to gather information through various field research projects," said Dr. Gary Alt, who heads the Deer Management Section. "I believe these new seasons offer hunters greater opportunities by setting Saturday as the opening day for antlerless deer seasons. At the same time, these opportunities will provide landowners and farmers with much needed relief."

Alt noted that studies of fawn mortality, buck/doe ratios, and the relationship between reproduction rates and nutrition in deer populations will begin. "We must base Pennsylvania's deer management decisions on sound, scientific data," Alt said. "To do so, we must increase our current knowledge of deer by getting out in the field and gathering more data now."

Steps taken to provide greater hunting opportunities, include:

- a statewide antlerless deer season that begins on a Saturday, concurrent with the last day of the regular antlered season;
- an early statewide muzzleloader season for antlerless deer that begins on a Saturday;
- the ability to issue unsold antlerless deer licenses to hunters for use on private property or public lands with an approved deer management plan;
- concurrent buck/doe seasons for junior and senior hunters, as well as holders of disabled person permits to use a vehicle for hunting, with required licenses; and
- continuing the opportunity to harvest either an antlered or antlerless deer on Deer Damage Farm Areas.

Additionally, Executive Director Vern Ross noted that specific language was adopted to ensure the agency's ability to extend the regular statewide antlerless season.

While hunters may take only one antlered deer per hunting license year, Commissioners approved a proposal to allow, during certain deer hunting seasons, the taking of more than one deer per day, but not at the same time.

In other seasons and bag limits action, Commissioners pulled back the proposed early opening of small game season in response to a request from the farming community. Commission staff originally proposed an Oct. 14

starting date for pheasant, rabbit and bobwhite quail seasons. However, based on comments from the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and other farmers who attended the Jan. 9 public meeting on seasons and bag limits, Commissioners moved the starting dates for those species to Oct. 28.

Proposed 2000-2001 hunting seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 7-9; Fall Season - Oct. 14-Nov. 25; Late Season - Dec. 26-Feb. 10, 2001 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Ruffed grouse: Oct. 14-Nov. 25 and Dec. 26-Jan. 27, 2001 (2 daily, 4 possession). There is no open season for taking ruffed grouse in the designated portion of SGL 176 in Centre County.

Rabbit (Cottontail): Oct. 28-Nov. 25 and Dec. 26-Feb. 10, 2001 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: Male Only - Oct. 28-Nov. 25. Male & female in designated areas - Oct. 28-Nov. 25 and Dec. 26-Feb. 10, 2001 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Bobwhite Quail: Oct. 28-Nov. 25 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)

Varying (snowshoe) hares: Dec. 26-30 (2 daily, 4 possession).

Woodchucks (groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1-Nov. 26 and Dec. 29-April 1, 2001, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. No limit.

Starlings and English sparrows: Unlimited. No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Wild turkey (Male or Female): Management Areas 1A, 1B & 2 - Oct. 28-Nov. 11; Area 7B - Oct. 28-Nov. 4; Areas 3, 4, 5, 6, 7A & 8 - Oct. 28-Nov. 18; Area 9A - Oct. 30-Nov. 1; Area 9B - Oct. 30-Nov. 4. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring gobbler (Bearded bird only): April 28, 2001-May 26, 2001.

Black bear: Nov. 20-Nov. 22.

Deer, archery (Antlered) Statewide: Sept 30-Oct. 20 and Oct. 25-Nov. 11 and Dec. 26-Jan. 13, 2001. One antlered deer, with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season.

Deer, archery (Antlerless) Statewide: Sept 30-Nov. 11 and Dec. 26-Jan. 13, 2001. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlered deer Statewide: Nov. 27-Dec. 9. One antlered deer, with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season.

Antlerless deer (Statewide): Nov. 27-Dec. 9. Junior and Senior License Holders, and Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) Holders only, with required antlerless license. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless deer (Statewide): Dec. 9-12. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license. The Executive Director is authorized to extend, by order, this season by one day either statewide or on a designated area basis where it appears, after polling the

Alt to discuss deer on PCN

DR. GARY ALT will appear on the Pennsylvania Cable Network's weekly "PCN Call-In Program" on Thursday, March 16, to discuss the new direction of the deer management program and to answer questions from callers. The program will air at 7 p.m. *(Check local listings for the PCN channel in your area.)*

"Deer management is a complex, but critically important issue for all Pennsylvanians," said Alt. "Recently, the Game Commission has taken dramatic steps to better manage our deer population. We need to explain these advances to the public, and PCN's Call-In program offers a perfect opportunity to maximize our outreach efforts."

At the April 3-4 Commission meeting, the Commissioners are scheduled to give final approval to the 2000-2001 seasons and bag limits proposed in January. See accompanying news stories in this issue for the innovative steps proposed to provide greater hunting opportunities and to better manage the deer herd.

Brian Lockman, PCN president and CEO, will host the program. The toll-free telephone number for callers to ask questions is 1-888-730-1310.

Available on 110 cable systems throughout the commonwealth, PCN is a nonprofit, nonpartisan cable television network that serves as the commonwealth's version of C-SPAN. PCN airs unedited live and same-day coverage of Pennsylvania Senate and House floor proceedings and committee hearings; along with press conferences, speeches and other public forums where the business of the state is debated, discussed and decided. PCN's live interactive call-in program allows viewers to speak directly with government officials, newsmakers and other knowledgeable parties on current commonwealth issues.

Commissioners and regional offices, that there has been an underharvest of antlerless deer.

Presque Isle State Park, Erie County: Dec. 6-8. One antlered. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless flintlock (Statewide): Oct. 21-24. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer antlered or antlerless flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 13, 2001. One antlered or one antlerless and an additional antlerless with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlerless: Nov. 27-Dec. 9. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license only on those lands designated by the Executive Director as "Deer Damage Areas" and posted with approved signs.

Deer, antlerless: Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Ritchie, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, antlered (Special Regulations Areas: Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties): Nov. 27-Dec. 9. One antlered deer with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long.

Deer, antlerless (Special Regula-

tions Areas: Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties): Nov. 27-Dec. 12 & Dec. 26-Jan. 13, 2001. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Proposed 2000-2001 Furtaking Seasons (Hunting):

Raccoon & foxes: Oct. 14-Feb. 24, 2001, unlimited.

Coyote, opossum, skunk & weasel: Unlimited. No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons.

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 & 3): Oct. 14-Feb. 24, 2001. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Proposed 2000-2001 Trapping Seasons: Mink & muskrat: Nov. 18-Jan. 7, 2001. Unlimited.

Coyote, fox, opossum, raccoon, skunk, weasel: Oct. 15-Feb. 24, 2001, unlimited.

Beaver (Statewide): Dec. 26-March 31, 2001 (Limits vary by Furbearer Management Zone).

Bobcat(Furbearer Management Zones 2 & 3): Oct. 15-Feb. 24, 2001. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.)

Proposed 2000-2001 Falconry Season: Squirrels, quail, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbits, snowshoe or varying hare, ringneck pheasant (male or female): Sept. 1-March 31, 2001. Daily and field possession limits vary.

Only one antlered deer (buck) may be taken during the hunting license year.

Bobcat season proposed

FOR THE FIRST time in nearly 30 years, Commissioners have proposed a bobcat season in Pennsylvania. "By limiting the number of bobcat hunting and trapping permits to 290, we will not pose a threat to the resource, but will be able to gather invaluable information about our state's bobcat population," said Dr. Matt Lovallo, Commission furbearer biologist.

Lovallo estimated the state's bobcat population to be between 3,000 and 3,500. Noting that this proposed season is not a predator control venture, he stated that based on the issuance of 290 permits, a conservative harvest of 175 bobcats can be expected. Hunters and trappers will be able to harvest bobcats in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, which are in northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania.

To distribute the limited bobcat permits, the Commission will accept applications from holders of furtaker licenses along with a non-refundable $5 fee. If selected in a random drawing, applicants will receive one permit, at no additional charge, to either hunt or trap a bobcat.

Other steps taken toward better deer management

IN ADDITION to the proposed new deer seasons, the Commissioners gave final approval to a change in rules that will provide farmers enrolled in the deer control permit program one subpermit for every five acres under

cultivation and then allow those subpermits to be issued to resident adult and junior license holders.

"This action is a step toward better managing deer populations in agricultural areas," said Dr. Gary Alt, "Hunters can and should be provided expanded opportunities to get into these problem areas. I encourage more farmers to join the Commission's cooperative land programs and the Link Program, which help direct hunter pressure to high concentrations of wildlife populations."

Rep. Ron Marsico (R-Dauphin), who had announced he was drafting legislation to allow resident junior license holders to participate in deer depredation hunts, thanked the Commissioners for adopting this new rule. "The action not only gives our young hunters an opportunity to participate in hunts on deer damage farms, but it also allows them the chance to share another hunting experience with their families," Rep. Marsico said. "This certainly will help further our commonwealth's hunting heritage."

Commissioners also gave preliminary approval to a proposed rule to allow landowners enrolled in the Commission's forest cooperative programs the ability to provide hunters an opportunity to take deer that enter exclosure areas. This proposed rule must be approved at a subsequent Commission meeting before taking effect.

Deer Management Working Group makes recommendations

THE Deer Management Working Group (DMWG), created in 1998 by the Game Commission, made several recommendations at the January meeting. Comprised of individuals representing hunters, government officials, foresters and farmers, DMWG worked to develop ways to address the controversial issues that have polarized factions interested in deer and their management.

"Working group members donated 2,500 hours to the task of advising the Game Commission on deer management issues," noted Scot Williamson of the Wildlife Management Institute, who served as the group's chairman. "All recommendations forwarded to the agency received 100 percent consensus from group members."

DMWG had made preliminary recommendations last year that led to the

New, Toll-Free Region Office Phone Numbers

The following toll-free numbers are now in operation:

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

development of a proposal to hunt antlerless deer in fenced forestry areas and prompted the agency to increase its issuance rate of deer depredation permits for landowners enrolled in the Game Commission's Deer Depredation Permit Program. The LINK Program, which was recently implemented, also was an outgrowth of a DMWG recommendation.

Recommendations forwarded to the Game Commissioners include:

- Citizen task forces or other stakeholder groups should be used to provide input on acceptable deer density targets.
- The PGC should accommodate and promote, whenever possible, the efforts by interested groups to improve deer management.
- The PGC should adopt the "Large Landowner Antlerless Deer Management Permit Program" proposal developed by the DMWG.
- The proposed deer management units currently being considered by the PGC are too large to control hunter harvest. Small units will better distribute hunter pressure.
- Deer management units may be harvest-, habitat- or culturally-based.
- New deer management units should be established as soon as possible; major roads or distinct topographical features should be used as boundaries.

New Farm-Game project in Clarion County approved

AT A TIME when more and more land is being converted from agricultural and open space to other uses not compatible with hunting, Commissioners were pleased with the opportunity to create a new Cooperative Farm-Game Project in northeastern Clarion County.

The Commission currently has 186 Farm-Game Projects in 59 counties, which open nearly 2.5 million acres of private property to public hunting. The projects involve more than 21,500 private landowners. Cooperating landowners sign an agreement with the Commission to keep their lands open to public hunting in exchange for certain incentives provided by the PGC. A Farm-Game Project consists of a number of contiguous properties totaling at least 1,000 acres.

The new Farm-Game Project includes 3,500 acres presently enrolled in Farm-Game Projects 142 and 236. The goal is to encourage additional landowners to enroll properties in this program and enhance hunting opportunities in northeastern Clarion County.

Commissioners took action on other Bureau of Land Management agenda items:

- For the third time in recent years, George L. Fenner, Jr. and his wife, Minerva, of Forty Fort, have donated land to the Game Commission. The most recent donation took place last October and involves nearly 16 acres in Luzerne County. The donation is subject to a two-year timber reservation to Wilkes University;
- Approval was given to a land exchange involving 1.5 acres of SGL 314 in Erie County going to Jesse J. Fedor and his wife, Kimberly, in exchange for six acres that will join two detached parcels of the same game land. The purpose of the exchange was to resolve a boundary encroachment. The Fedors will pay transfer taxes and recording fee for the property exchange;
- Approval was given to establish

new, or change existing propagation areas on state game lands in the Southeast Region to better protect breeding, nesting and brooding waterfowl. These include: A new seasonal propagation area of 22 acres on SGL 196, Bucks County, February 1 to June 30; three new propagation areas totaling 26 acres on SGL 234, Montgomery County, February 1 to June 30; two new propagation areas totaling 23 acres on two sites on SGL 242, York County, February 1 to June 30; three new propagation areas totaling 67 acres on Area 416, Indian Rock Dam, York County, February 1 to June 30; change a 24-acre area at Struble Lake, Chester County, from a permanent propagation area to season status, February 1 to June 30; change closed dates on Areas 6-115 and 6-130 on SGL 243, York County from March 1 to June 15 to February 1 to June 30; and

• Approval was given to change an existing snowmobile trail on SGL 26, Bedford and Cambria counties, in order to remove traffic from an unsafe section of roadway and an area along Bob's Creek used as a winter travelway by wildlife.

In other business, the Commission:

• Created a new classification, "Wildlife Conservationist," for retiring or retired deputy wildlife conservation officers with 10 or more years of service. While they will not have law enforcement authority, these individuals will represent the agency at clubs, assist with creating exhibits and perform other wildlife management activities;

• Gave tentative approval to permit the use of .410 shotguns for deer hunting in the Special Regulations Area counties of Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia;

• Gave tentative approval to a proposal requiring county treasurers to mail antlerless licenses to successful applicants by no later than the third Monday in September;

• To resolve problems caused by fluctuating water levels, preliminarily approved language to allow beaver trappers to use snares completely or partially submerged in water was given. The commissioners additionally gave tentative approval to language changing the stop location on beaver snares so that they close to a minimum circumference of seven inches;

• Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to expand either-sex pheasant hunting to many southern tier counties. Expansion areas have low wild pheasant populations and low capability to support long-term pheasant populations;

• In the interest of public safety, gave tentative approval to requiring archers to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange clothing while moving to and from stand locations during the overlap archery deer/fall flintlock muzzleloading deer seasons. The orange may be removed when the bowhunter is in a tree or ground stand, but in doing so, a 100-square-inch or larger orange band must be displayed within 15 feet of the archer's hunting location;

• Gave preliminary approval to limiting lawful hunting devices to shotguns and archery gear in turkey management areas 1A, 1B, 9A and 9B;

• Agreed to allocate $2,000 annually to help send Pennsylvania's winning Envirothon team to the national championship;

• Approved a $2,500 contribution to the Erie-based non-profit "Hunt of a Lifetime," which provides hunting opportunities to children with serious or terminal illnesses;

• Set the following Game Commission meeting schedule: April 3-4 and June 5-6, both to be held at Har-

risburg headquarters; and Oct. 2-3, at a southcentral Pennsylvania location yet to be determined;

• Gave preliminary approval to permitting the use of maxi-balls and the use of flintlock pistols during flintlock muzzleloader deer seasons;

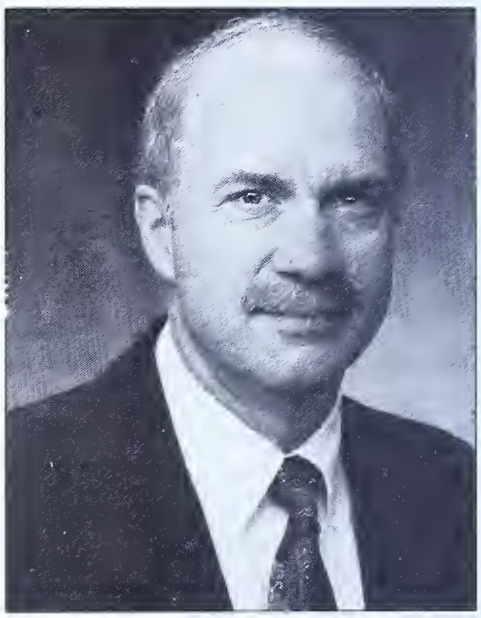
• Approved a request to create a "Sportsman/Sportswoman of the Year Award" to honor resident hunters who demonstrate a commitment to conservation and continuing Pennsylvania's hunting heritage.

• Vernon K. Shaffer, Reading, was re-elected to serve as president of the Board of Game Commissioners. Shaffer, who served as a Berks County commissioner for 24 years and a deputy wildlife conservation officer for 20 years, was appointed to the Game Commission in 1994. Dr. Nicholas Spock, Shamokin, was re-elected vice president and Samuel J. Dunkle, Duncansville, secretary.

Graybill named new I&E Director

JAMES CARL GRAYBILL JR. has been named director of the agency's Bureau of Information and Education. Graybill, 51, had served as acting director of the bureau since the retirement of the late Lantz Hoffman, in November 1998.

Graybill became assistant director of the bureau in 1982, and was responsible for planning, developing and directing the agency's public education programs and conservation education projects. He joined the Game Commission in 1979 as a Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist. Previously, he had served as a vocational agriculture and natural resources teacher in the Ephrata Area School District for nearly 10 years.



The Lebanon County resident earned a bachelor's degree from Penn State University in 1970 and a master's degree from PSU in 1976. Graybill is a 1966 graduate of Northern Lebanon High School.

"The Game Commission must redouble its efforts to educate Pennsylvanians about the diversity of our wildlife and the wild places we all treasure," Executive Director Vern Ross said. "The selection of Carl Graybill to head up that effort and the Bureau of Information and Education was a natural.

"Carl has been striving to improve the commission's outreach and educational programs, and I believe he will continue to be a valuable asset to the commission."

The Information and Education Bureau has a staff of 22 in the Harrisburg headquarters, including professional, technical and clerical employees. In addition, the bureau works directly with six regional information and education supervisors and six regional wildlife education supervisors.

Otters to be released in Southwest

UP TO 12 rivers otters were slated to be released in the Youghiogheny River basin in southwestern Somerset County. These latest releases bring to 100 the number of otters released since 1982, when the program to expand the rare furbearer's range in Pennsylvania was launched.

"As Pennsylvania's water quality has vastly improved in recent years, our waterways can once again sustain a diverse abundance of wildlife and fish," said Cal DuBrock, director of the agency's Bureau of Wildlife Management. "Reintroducing otters to these ecosystems is an important part in helping to restore that diversity."

Since the program began, otter populations have been growing in northcentral and northwestern Pennsylvania, and in the southwest, otters are beginning to take hold.

A healthy native otter population inhabits northeastern Pennsylvania, from where 30 to 40 otters have been captured and released in other parts of the commonwealth over the years.

A few otters have also been seen in the lower Susquehanna River basin, indicating the animals are expanding their range there, too. Because otters are secretive and nocturnal, it's hard to estimate the population.

DuBrock recognized the support of many partners in the program, including the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the Pennsylvania departments of Environmental Protection and Conservation and Natural Resources; Youghiogheny Riverwatch; the Pennsylvania Trappers Association; Pennsylvania State University; East Stroudsburg University; and Frostburg State University, Maryland.

"The rapid recovery of certain bodies of water in southwestern Pennsylvania is remarkable," said Tom Serfass, assistant professor of wildlife ecology at Frostburg State University. "This is another example of how water quality influences the well-being of aquatic-dependent wildlife as well as recreational opportunities for people. Otters and sportsmen are allies in the fight for clean water.

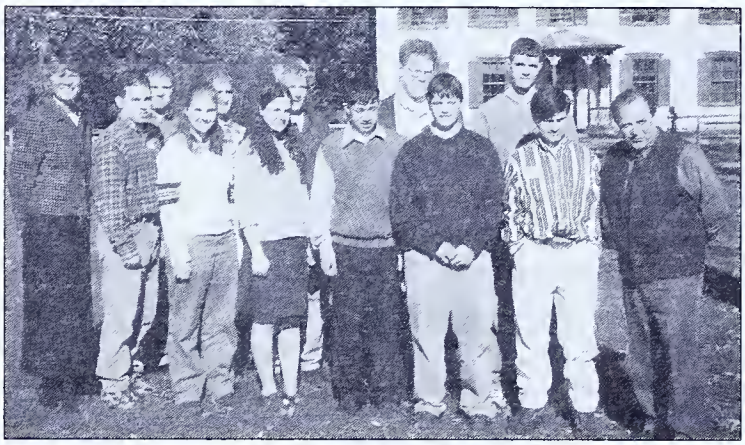
"If otters are able to return to the waterways in this area, it means the Youghiogheny River and its tributaries also will be providing quality fishing opportunities for humans."

A mature male otter weighs 10 to 25 pounds and is 30 to 40 inches in length, plus a 12- to 15-inch tail. Females are slightly smaller. An otter is muscular, streamlined and solidly built, somewhat like a dachshund; height at the shoulder is about 10 inches. An otter's tail is long and tapered, thickest where it joins the body and furred its entire length. The face is broad, and the eyes protrude slightly.

Otters prefer to feed mainly on minnows, sunfish, suckers, crayfish and carp. Other foods include frogs, turtles, snails, mussels, snakes and snake eggs, worms, insects, aquatic plants and roots. (For more information on river otters,visit www.pgc.state.pa.us. Click on "Wildlife," then choose "Wildlife Reference Guide," "Assorted Wildlife Information and Photographs," and "River Otter.")

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Youth Council established



CHOTTY SPRENKLE, left, and Jim Brett, right, flank members of the new Youth Advisory Council present during the ceremony in Harrisburg where the formation of the new council was announced.

GOVERNOR Tom Ridge has appointed a Governor's Youth Sportsman's Advisory Council, to provide input on factors affecting hunter and angler recruitment and retention, conservation topics and other issues affecting youngsters and the outdoors.

At a ceremony announcing the new council, Jim Brett, the Governor's Sportsman's Advisor, welcomed the council's first members. "It's quite official," Brett explained. "It's not just something you belong to. The governor appointed you."

The council was an idea of Brett and Charlotte "Chotty" Sprenkle, two members of the Governor's Sportsman's Advisory Council. Brett has long been involved with young people in his long-held former position of Curator at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Sprenkle has worked with young people in several capacities for years as a naturalist. The council members are varied in their activities. About two-thirds are hunters and anglers, the others are into hiking, camping and canoeing.

Members of the council are Michael Moratelli, Elysburg; Kyle Russel, Carlisle; Jason Wagner, Elizabethtown; Frank Tamulonnis, Orwigsburg; Kevin Lutz, Robesonia; Brett Bowser, Loysburg; Colleen Boland, East Stroudsburg; Suellen Clemmer, Renovo; Joey Lech, Tunkhannock; Nathan Cerato, Hawley; Shawn Pierson, Milford; Issac Slyder, Emporium; Jacob Haskins, Emporium; Liz Tully, Elverson; Chuck Reese, Treasure Lake; and Meredith Odato, Landisburg.

Theresa Alberici of the Game Commission told the council members, "We need to conserve where we live." Further, "We need to know what we have nearby and take care of it." She also spoke about the Game Commission's many programs for youngsters. Towards the end of the ceremony, Sprenkle led a free-wheeling discussion that touched on Sunday hunting, license fee increases and trout stamps. Council members disagreed on all issues, but they remained calm and showed respect for others' viewpoints.

Some of the things council members listed as impediments to youth hunting include negative media influence, over-use of computers, too much time watching TV and organized sports.

Future meetings will be held throughout the state, to avail the council of the state's outstanding natural features, including wildlife. The view from here is that in the future, the Governor's Youth Sportsman's Advisory Council will definitely "achieve things." — *John McGonigle*

Hunter-Trapper Education essay contest winners announced

AS GRAND PRIZE winners in the Game Commission's 1999 Hunter Education Essay Contest, Michele M. Reider of Newport, Perry County, and Jeffrey C. Deussing, Philadelphia, are bound for, respectively, Texas and Wyoming.

Reider emerged as the grand prize winner in the junior category (ages 12-15) and will attend Safari Club International's (SCI) Apprentice Hunter Camp at the YO Ranch in Texas. Deussing was the grand prize recipient in the senior category (ages 16-18) and will attend SCI's American Wilderness Leadership School in Jackson, Wyoming.



Kevin R.Lutz, Michele Reider, Jeffery Deussing, Paul Ziegenfuss, and Charles Schwinger were honored at the January Commission meeting for their entries in the 1999 Hunter Education Essay Contest.

The theme of the 1999 contest was "Being a responsible hunter: What it means to me." Nearly 700 youngsters from throughout Pennsylvania entered essays in the contest, which is double the number of entries of past years.

"To ensure that Pennsylvania's hunting heritage continues to flourish, we must encourage more young people to share their hunting experiences with their peers," said Keith A. Snyder, Hunter-Trapper Education Division chief. "This essay contest offers our younger hunters a forum to express their views on being a responsible hunter, as well as the enjoyment they get from hunting."

The grand prize winners, together with the first- and second-place entries in each division were invited to be recognized during the Commission's meeting in January.

Besides the grand prize trips, other contest prizes include: Savage rifles; H&R shotguns; Matterhorn sport boots; and Sightron binoculars. All entrants received a Game Commission "Working Together for Wildlife" embroidered patch.

Junior Division Winners: Grand Prize: Michele M. Reider, Newport, Perry County; 1st Place: Paul M. Ziegenfuss, Northampton, Northampton County; 2nd Place: Charles W. Schwinger IV, Fairless Hills, Bucks County; 3rd Place: Benjamin T. Barbetta, Mather, Greene County; and 4th Place: Matthew C. Miller, Nazareth, Northampton County.

Senior Division Winners: Grand Prize: Jeffrey C. Deussing, Philadelphia; 1st Place: Robert L. Mielke, New Castle, Lawrence County; 2nd Place: Kevin R. Lutz, Robesonia, Berks County; 3rd Place: Peter W. Pliska, North Huntingdon, Westmoreland County; and 4th Place: Heidilyn Hoffmeister, Levittown, Bucks County.

"Being a responsible hunter: What it means to me"

Being a responsible hunter means a lot to me. I try to conduct myself with the utmost respect for the hunters around me as well as the quarry I am seeking. When I wear my hunting license I know that I do not only represent myself, but the state of Pennsylvania, and all other hunters as well. Accidents rarely happen but I know they still exist. I feel it is my duty, as a responsible hunter, to try and set the best example possible for others to follow. It is my hope that others will carry on this example to fellow hunters, for this is the only way our woods can become free of accidents. Another big part of being a responsible hunter is to try to educate others about proper woodsmenship. This can be done not only by telling those who need guidance what to do but also by showing them what to do, setting an example for them. This allows for the less experienced to feel more confident about themselves as well as what they are doing, and in return makes them responsible hunters.

Being a responsible hunter in general means being a good, patient and genuine person. A responsible hunter is one who is strict about safety and looks out for the well-being of himself/herself as well as others. They are also patient and not afraid to help the less experienced. Most important, they are respectful to themselves, others, the land and their quarry. I believe these are the qualities that a responsible hunter possess. If we strive to bestow these qualities in ourselves, as well as others, then we can truly say we are responsible hunters.

— Jeffrey C. Deussing, Senior Grand Prize winner

What does being a responsible hunter mean to me? First and foremost is the safety of myself and my fellow sportsmen. In order to ensure this safety, I must learn all that is possible about the game I hunt, the land on which I hunt, and the firearm with which I hunt. I must go forth with an attitude that no animal or trophy is worth the life of a fellow hunter.

The second aspect to being a responsible hunter is to always have respect for the land on which I hunt. In this respect for the land, I must never forget the owner, however. In order to do these things a simple question can be asked to myself. If I were the landowner, would I be pleased with the respect shown to me and my land? This will ensure for years of harmonious hunting on that land.

Respect for the wildlife is another huge part of responsible hunting. Not only should we be thankful for the food provided by the wildlife, but also for the hours of enjoyment that they provide for us. While we are taking part in these hours, let's not forget to show our thanks. Making an ethical kill is one of many ways to do this.

Although there is no end to the responsibilities of a sportsman, I will end with enforcement of game laws. It is as simple as right and wrong. If another hunter is in the wrong, he must be approached or even reported.

In conclusion, there are many responsibilities to being a hunter. If we keep safety, law enforcement, land, owner and wildlife respect in mind, we will have many happy days as a responsible hunter ahead of us.

— Michele M. Reider, Junior Grand Prize winner

Another View
By Linda Steiner

After the hectic pace of the modern firearms deer seasons, the "frontloader" season offers hunters a chance to relax and partake in a more laid back hunt.

Friends and Flintlocks



Linda Steiner

THE AFTER-CHRISTMAS flintlock season is a great time to get out with friends and try to move some deer.

"THIS IS a real hunting season," I said, surprised at my new-found truth.

One of my friends, a veteran muzzleloader hunter, and I were walking the game lands road to the car after quitting time, during the 1999-2000 flintlock deer season. I got no comment from him in return, just a look that said, "Of course muzzleloader hunting is a real season, and it's about time you realized that."

Pennsylvania's black-powder deer season, following hard on the Christmas holiday, never meant much to me — until this past year. The time between Christmas and New Year's was always a round of visiting relatives and squeezing in work days. I was dimly aware that some of the state's hunters were still out after deer.

If I thought about flintlock season at all, I figured it was a difficult hunt, at best. Deer had already been hunted for six weeks of archery season, plus two weeks of buck season and three days of doe. Their ability to sidestep hunters should be honed to a fine edge by muzzleloader season, and the ones left must possess Einstein IQs or be too lucky for me to break their winning streak. Besides, by flintlock season, whitetail numbers have been reduced appreciably from their early fall high, when the population was augmented by fawns. With fewer deer available to muzzleloader hunters, I thought my chances of getting a shot would be negligible.

But I hadn't counted on the enthusiasm of friends. My husband and I found we would be available the week after Christmas to host a muzzleloader camp, so we let our buddies know months in advance to get muzzleloader stamps and count on coming to our place for blackpowder season. I

was committed now, with no way to back out of finally flintlock hunting.

I already owned a flintlock, a 50-caliber, a compact muzzleloader that I knew would be a joy to carry after toting my heavy .30-06 with the 4-10x scope during buck and doe season. I've used the .30-06 all my hunting life (nearly 30 years), as well as a variable power scope. I know that firearm well and can quickly aim with the telescopic sight. Would I ever feel comfortable with a blackpowder gun?

I confess I didn't start early enough in the year getting proficient with my flintlock. I did have several sessions at our backyard range, with my husband and friends who were accomplished muzzleloader shooters coaching me, sometimes all at once. After these practices, I felt confident about the do's of loading my flintlock, as well as the safety-oriented don'ts.

If you've never loaded a muzzleloader before, the very process seems backward from modern firearms. My .30-06 loads sensibly and "normally." I pull back the bolt, which opens up a space at the back end of the barrel — a long ways from the muzzle — into which I drop an all-in-one cartridge. But the front-loading flintlock is completely different, with a lot more hands-on to the loading process. It deserves the designation of a "primitive firearm."

Pouring explosive powder down the business end of a gun barrel, where I know the shot will come out later, is very strange and seems contrary to my training. I was careful to keep the muzzle tilted away from my face while loading, but I still had to work my hands over and even push things into it, virtually down the rifle's throat.

"Keep this order in mind," I was told, "Powder, patch and ball." With practice, I eventually didn't feel so fumble fingered about tipping the contents of the powder measure into the barrel, centering the lead ball on the lubricated patch, and starting the ball into the barrel. Of all the strange, new equipment, I like best the roundish wood tool that starts the ball into the mouth of the barrel, for its comfortable feel in my hand and its simple utility. I got good at seating the ball and patch against the powder already in the barrel, by pushing with the ramrod. One of my buddies made a mark on the Fiberglas ramrod so I'd know if the ball was snugly down and not stopped part way. That trick gave me a lot more confidence that my shot would be safe.

Next to learn was making sure the touchhole was clear, by using the end of a bent paper clip. Then I got to use the ornate-looking flintlock mechanism, the part of the rifle that definitely recollected the time when Pennsylvania was a colony. I liked being reminded that I was using a style of firearm that had a history and wasn't simply inconvenient to load and shoot. I was shown how to replace a flint, how to position it to get a reliable spark, and how much primer powder to place in the pan. Not too much, my friends said. "The idea is to get a flash through the touchhole, not make a wick of the primer." Excessive primer powder is one of the causes of a hang-fire, when it burns like a fuse. The fall of the flint against the frizzen and the shot of the ball should be nearly simultaneous. Not *Shu-u-u-u-sh, BOOM!*, but rather *Shu-BOOM!*

To my happy surprise, I found I could shoot the flintlock without the major flinching I was afraid I might experience, when the bright flash went off in front of my face. The ignition of the primer and the report of the gun didn't bother me at all. The sulfurous cloud of smoke was another matter, and I coughed a lot. "The flintlock has a lot less kick than I expected," I told my coaches. "That's because the steel barrel is so thick and heavy," they explained.

As a longtime scope user, I found the buckhorn sight alien. In my hunting career, I had rarely touched a rifle with this traditional open sight. I admit to being a greenhorn with the buckhorn. Compared to a scope's thin-line reticle that can be centered on the target, and its magnifying

power, the buckhorn sight seems sloppy. I realized I needed lots more practice to become truly comfortable with this part of flintlock shooting. In the time I had preseason, I became as familiar as I could with my muzzleloader and sighted it in.

What would hunting with the flintlock be like? Would I feel that I was out in the snow and cold with hardly a chance of seeing a deer? Would many other people be out hunting, or would my friends and I be the hardy and foolish few?

The crowded game lands parking lot answered the second question, and the many deer tracks crossing the access road addressed the other. We had decided to hunt "back in," as far from the parking lots as we could get. On this game lands, the "far country" is down a steep hill along a creek. Reaching the less-accessible spots was part of my friends' blackpowder hunting strategy.

"We'll let the other hunters push deer to us," they said, and they were right. From the increased tracks, through-the-snow and down-to-dirt trails, the beds and piles of droppings, the deer had already been pushed back in. Because the deer had experienced so much hunting pressure already, we looked for them in thickets located a distance from the parking lots that were too far for most hunters to walk and to drag out a deer. We ended up more than two miles from our vehicle.

Being in the woods long before daybreak isn't a requirement of muzzleloader season, I learned. I know I'd had enough of sitting in the cold, dark predawn woods during buck and doe seasons. For flintlock hunting, we had breakfast as the sky was graying and headed into the woods in good daylight. We decided we weren't going to depend on natural deer movement to fill our tags, but on hunter movement to roust the whitetails.

Which it did. Other hunters began wandering the woods about mid-morning, plus our friends put on both small organized drives and informal pushes. The latter technique lets each of our group hunt on his own, at his own pace, yet we work for each other, moving deer. The instructions are usually to hunt parallel to each other, such as out a hillside, walking, sitting a short while and then moving on, toward others of the group who are on stand or who are moving slowly toward the first group. We all wear blaze orange in abundance, as we do in buck and doe seasons, so the tactic is a safe one.

This past year, several of the group got deer using this strategy, including a 4-point buck and big doe, while others got shots or nearly shot. I missed a doe, the fault of not being as practiced with the open sights as I should have been. This happened New Year's Day, and I made a resolution to be more accomplished as a flintlock shooter, before the next blackpowder season.

Other observations from my premier flintlock hunt? Cleanliness is critical, of the gun barrel that is. Cleaning the barrel regularly, even if it is time-consuming, messy and smelly, has allowed our shots to go off without fail. I also learned that you don't need to wear a raincoat if you're a blackpowder hunter. The advice to "keep your powder dry" is not just empty words. If the day brings downpours, find something else to do, perhaps scouting for the next dry day. Don't frustrate yourself trying to get the flintlock to fire in the rain.

This past season, I noticed that quite a few muzzleloader hunters were wearing camouflage, some adding an orange hat or vest, but most with no orange at all. This is legal, but not a practice I liked. I think that "Be safe, be seen, wear orange" is a good rule to follow, and I wish more flintlock hunters would add the highly visible color to their clothing.

Yes, flintlock hunting is a real deer season. When you've had a good time afield all fall and haven't gotten bored with going after whitetails, and a tag is still lonesome on your license, muzzleloader season makes a great "bonus round" — that's even better shared with friends. □

Behind the Badge

By Rich Cramer
Wildlife Education Supervisor
Northwest Region



Dead Deer Do Tell Tales

THE ANTLERLESS deer season is one of the most exciting times for Wildlife Conservation Officers. A short season with a great deal of activity, many things can and do happen. The 1998 antlerless season was typical in that respect.

I had spent the first day of the season assigned to radio dispatch duty in the Northwest Region Office, so I was ready to get out and patrol for the second and third days of the season. I began the second day early by picking up Deputy Sam Hale at his home. We decided to patrol around SGL 24 and Guitonville, where there is a lot of property enrolled in the Forest Game Cooperative Program.

The Collins Pine Company owns many large parcels in Forest County and opens most of their gated roads during the regular firearm deer seasons. These roads, because they are closed to motorized vehicles for most of the year, are popular places for hunters to go during the deer seasons. We patrol these areas because we want to en-

sure they remain enrolled in the cooperative program. Private landowners such as Collins Pine who open their land to public hunting are a great asset to hunters and are to be commended for their unselfish attitudes concerning the use of their land.

Sam and I drove back what we call the "Orchard Road" to check hunters. This road is several miles long with a few side spurs providing space for those wishing to get off the beaten path. On our travels, we encountered several groups of hunters, including one who had a loaded firearm in his vehicle. His excuse was that he didn't think he would see any "wardens" back on the road. A bad excuse, but one heard often.

Most WCOs have been trained in wildlife forensics, and this training comes in handy, especially when they are attempting to determine the time of death of an animal.

When we arrived at the end of the road, I decided to patrol on foot with a portable radio while Sam drove the vehicle out and around to the next road. I would walk out, check hunters along the way, and meet him at the end of the next road. Most of the roads in the Tionesta Creek valley are dead ends, either by design or due to the construction of the Tionesta Dam in the 1940s. I thought that by hiking down into the valley and up to the next road on foot I might encounter hunters using ATVs illegally. Collins Pine, as most of our other cooperating landowners, does not allow the use of ATVs on their property at any time. Many people disregard their wishes and continue to operate their ATVs and dirt bikes on this property. It baffles me why people feel the need to abuse property that is not their own. They go against the wishes of the property owner and jeopardize the continued use of the property by those who choose to obey the laws and the wishes of the landowner.

It took about an hour or so to walk over to where Sam had driven to meet me. During my walk I didn't see another person, but I did spot a mature bald eagle flying around Tionesta Creek. When I arrived back at the vehicle, Sam said there were several deer hanging at a camp not far up the road. We decided to stop and check them, to obtain age and health information. We record this information on what we call a 502 Form.

We drove up to the camp and got out to check the deer. There were two does and a buck tied to a pole between two trees. We immediately noticed that the does were tagged with Allegheny County tags. Several people came out of the camp to talk with us. I immediately recognized one as Mr. Bebout, an individual I had cited just three weeks earlier for illegally operating his ATV in the valley I had just walked through. I asked which deer belonged to whom, and Mr. Bebout claimed one of the does. The other two deer belonged to two hunters still out in the woods. I asked Mr. Bebout where and when he had killed the doe hanging on the pole with his tag on it. He said that he and his companions had driven from Ohio to the camp on Sunday night. He and the other hunter had gotten up early Monday morning and drove to Allegheny County where they had shot the two does hanging at the camp.

I found it hard to believe that anybody would drive to a camp in Forest County and then go to Allegheny County to hunt for deer. It just doesn't happen. I then asked Mr. Bebout where exactly in Allegheny County he had taken his deer. He said that he didn't know, it was just somewhere in Allegheny County. I asked Mr. Bebout this same question several times and got the



same answer. I then informed him that I was once the WCO in eastern Allegheny County and knew the county well. Surely he could give me some clue to where he was when he shot the deer. At this he became extremely agitated and said he didn't want to talk to me any further. He was going to call his lawyer and get this taken care of right now. I told him that he was free to call his lawyer and did not have to talk to me, but that he was under arrest and could not leave until I talked with the other hunters when they returned from the woods. Mr. Bebout then went inside to make his phone calls.

Just then Sam motioned for me to come over and take another look at the deer. With a smile on his face he pointed at the wound on each of the does. I looked closer and realized that these deer had been killed with rifles, not shotguns with slugs as is required in Allegheny County. Even if these deer had been killed in Allegheny County, which I did not believe, they had been taken unlawfully. I walked back and informed Mr. Bebout's brother of this and asked him to see if Mr. Bebout would like to talk with me again. The brother went inside the camp and came back out and said that Mr. Bebout would not talk with us. That was fine, we would just wait until the other hunters returned from the woods.

While we were waiting, we examined the buck more closely. Most WCOs have been trained in wildlife forensics, and this training comes in handy, especially when we are attempting to determine the time of death of an animal. A cursory check of the buck indicated that it had most likely been killed after the date written on the tag, the preceding Saturday, the last day of buck season. I didn't have my "time-of-death" kit with me, so we called WCO Dave Beinhaur on the radio to come and assist us with the determination on time of death of the buck.

Dave was not far away and soon arrived with Deputy Tim Kaltenbaugh. About the same time, the two hunters we were waiting for returned. We had been told that they had left the camp on ATVs, but they returned on foot. I asked where their ATVs were and they said that they were at a neighboring camp. I walked to the neighboring camp with one of the hunters, Mr. Christian, to see if the ATVs were there. The vehicles were parked behind the camp and each had a doe — tagged with Forest County tags — strapped to the back.

I asked Mr. Christian where he and the other hunter, Ms. Crain, had driven their ATVs during their hunt. Mr. Christian became evasive and said that they had not traveled onto any Collins Pine property. I then asked him about the does hanging back at the Bebout camp.

At first he stuck to the story that he and Mr. Bebout had driven to Allegheny County early Monday morning. When pressed, though, he admitted that the deer were killed with rifles, and then he said they were both killed in Forest County, not far from the camp. We then began the short walk back to the Bebout camp.

Back at the Bebout camp, Sam, Dave and Tim were getting ready for the time of death procedure to be done on the buck. I asked Mr. Christian who had shot the buck, and when he said that Ms. Crain had shot

it on the previous Saturday, I told him that I didn't believe that was true. I then asked Ms. Crain who had shot the buck and when, and she related the same information. Dave and I collected all of the figures and measurements necessary to determine the time of death of the buck. After we had collected and analyzed all of the data, we determined that the buck had been killed no more than 18 hours earlier. That would make the time of death during shooting hours on Monday, the first day of the antlerless deer season.

I walked over to where Mr. Christian was seated, out of hearing distance of Ms. Crain, and bluntly said to him that the buck was killed on Monday. He looked up at me and in a quiet voice asked, "Who told you that?" I looked at him and again said that the buck was killed on Monday. He looked at the ground and in a barely audible voice said, "Yeah, it was killed Monday. But she shot it herself." I walked back over to where Ms. Crain was standing and told her the same thing. She just looked at the ground and didn't say a thing.

I told all three individuals that they were going to be cited for these violations, and that they were entitled to a hearing before the District Justice, or they could settle on field acknowledgements of guilt (an option at the time). They decided to settle their fines on the field acknowledgements.

All three individuals were charged with possessing a deer unlawfully taken. The two does because they were killed in Forest County and tagged with Allegheny County tags, and the buck because it was killed out of season. All three deer were confiscated and the violators' fines totaled $1,500.

There might be those who think deer can't talk, but in this case the dead deer said a thousand words. ☐

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Birds of prey are fun to watch anytime, but the red-tailed hawk's couthship display is particularly fascinating.

Redtails in Love



~ Red-tailed Hawk ~

MARCH IS COURTSHIP time for red-tailed hawks. Most have spent their winters farther south, but for more than a decade we have had at least one in residence throughout the winter. We're apt to hear its piercing whistle on even the coldest winter days, or watch it being harassed by the local crow gang. Often it sits for hours on a branch overlooking First Field and watches for prey.

Once the March winds pick up, though, a pair of redtails appears over First Field, and for days we watch as the birds soar and dive, strengthening their pair bonds and defending their territory from interlopers. This part of their lives is performed out in the open, and birdwatchers are liable to be treated to breathtaking aerial displays throughout the month.

Several years ago, on March 7, I sat on our veranda late in afternoon. It was 57 degrees, the March wind was blowing, and the yard birds were in a frenzy of joy — calling, singing and chasing. A pair of redtails, sounding to my ears like tinhorns, emitted what the experts refer to as their "chwirk calls," as they circled above Sapsucker Ridge. Then one alighted on the remnants of an old nest while the other flew above it, circling, calling and landing in nearby treetops, its legs extended downward. I was watching the so-called "talon-drop" display that redtails perform in courtship or to defend their territory. Because they eventually flew off together, instead of one routing the other, they were probably a mated pair and not two males fighting over territory.

Last March 24, the redtails used our First Field, yard and wooded ridgetops for even more elaborate courtship rites. I had been away for most of the day, but what a homecoming I received. Our son Dave announced that redtails had been courting for hours above the field. When I stepped outside to put on my hiking boots, the redtails flew low over our yard, *chwirking*

and performing talon drop. Then the female flew to a tall white pine on the far side of our powerline right-of-way, and the male streaked after her.

Because of the distance, we were not positive that they mated, but the male did appear to land briefly on the female's back. According to ornithologists, the female leans forward with her wings dangling loosely at her sides, inviting the male to mate. Copulation lasts from 5 to 10 seconds.

Eager to make the best of the beautiful day, I hiked along Sapsucker Ridge Trail and watched the first turkey vultures of the year soaring overhead. The redtails also continued to fly up and down the ridgetop, giving both their piercing whistles and their chwirk calls. I sat against the largest oak tree on our property and watched as the male redtail sailed over First Field *chwirking*. Then, he flew straight down and up then down again, like an airplane caught in extreme turbulence, before disappearing from view. Although this so-called "undulatory flight" is thought to be a territorial display, he appeared to be using it in courtship, because only a couple seconds later the female skimmed through the woods seven feet from the ground and a mere 30 feet from where I sat undetected by the courting pair.

The male zipped past after her and both disappeared over the side of the mountain toward the valley. I followed their path on slow, earthbound feet, stumbling over rocks and fallen limbs. By the time I made it to the edge of the ridgetop, they had disappeared for the day.

Redtails are faithful to each other and their territory for as long as they live. If one dies the survivor will hold on to the territory until another mate appears. The territory itself ranges from half a square mile to more than two square miles, depending on the abundance of food, nesting and perching sites.

Our open home grounds and First Field, tucked below and between two wooded ridgetops, seems to be ideal habitat for redtails. We also have plenty of tall trees overlooking the surrounding countryside for both nesting and perching. I suspect that they nest at the end of Sapsucker Ridge, because we usually see a redtail family flying and calling in the area in early summer.

But much of the redtails' home life is difficult to observe. "Nest-building is a very deliberate process," Arthur Cleveland Bent once wrote in his *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey*. "The birds visit the nest at infrequent intervals and are extremely cautious about it. If they suspect that the nest is watched they will not come near it."

Donald and Lillian Stokes in *A Guide to Bird Behavior* caution, "It prefers to nest in rural or wild areas and at this time is easily disturbed, often abandoning its nest during nest building or incubation phases if humans approach too closely." Taking this advice to heart, I have not tried to find the redtails' nest but have been content to watch only what they are willing to share.

I was content until I read Marie Winn's charming book *RedTails in Love: A Wildlife Drama in Central Park*. For seven years a male redtail has not only courted over Central Park in the heart of New York City, but has nested on the facade of an apartment house on Fifth Avenue and 74th Street, in clear view of a growing number of "Fifth Avenue Hawkwatchers." (Apparently he has not read Bent or Stokes.)

Named Pale Male because his head is almost white and his white breast lacks the usual dark bellyband, he and a succession of mates have successfully raised 12 chicks from 1995 to 1999. His first mate, called First Love, ate a poisoned pigeon and died on a ledge of the Metropolitan Museum. His second mate, Chocolate, collided with a car on the nearby New Jersey turnpike. Both were victims of city living. But Blue, a dark-headed female, has so far lasted three years.

Winn, a nature columnist for the *Wall*

Street Journal and author of "The Plug-In Drug" (television), is also an avid birdwatcher. Beginning in 1991, she joined the "Regulars," as they call themselves, who not only watch birds, but also record their observations of all wild animals in the park in the "Central Park Bird Register" and "Nature Notes" at the Loeb Boathouse. The Regulars, she writes, "notice what others have long learned to ignore: the sights and sounds, smells, textures and tastes of the world around them. [They] forget the self and its hungry needs. [They] pay attention to tiny details." One Regular — Lambert Pohner — even had his own obituary in the *New York Times* " . . . an elf of a man, with a white beard and a bush hat . . . who watched over the birds and butterflies of Central Park for more than 40 years."

For those of us who might think that a nature lover in New York City is an oxymoron, this tale of Central Park and its human and natural inhabitants is inspiring. Central Park, designed to be a manicured garden, has become a wilder place mostly due to lack of funds to keep it as spiffy as its designers intended.

Bird diversity has increased from 121 species in 1886 to 275 species by 1996. It is, Winn says, "a green oasis in the concrete desert." On the Eastern Flyway, it's also a birding hotspot during migration.

Still, a nesting redtail seemed beyond the bounds of belief at first. Ornithologist Dean Amadon summed up the general feeling that "that male must have a screw loose somewhere." But Charles R. Preston, an expert on red-tailed hawks, was a bit more temperate in his remarks. "Red-tailed hawks are an amazingly adaptable species," he told Winn, "and they have been known to use various other man-made structures for nesting."

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

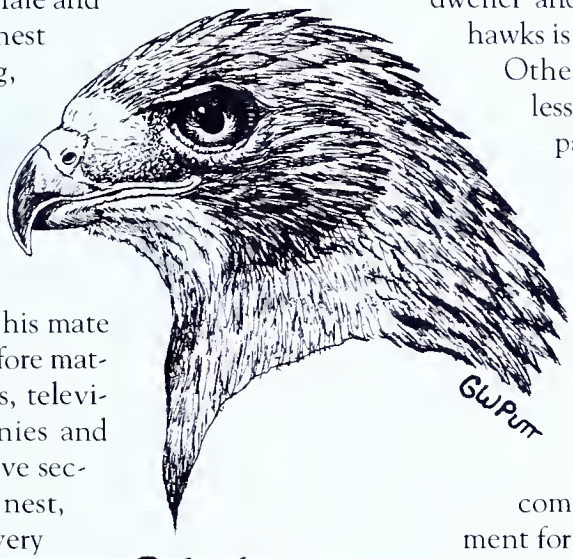
Gestation Time

Match the correct number of gestation days (from conception to birth) with the species on the left. The species' number of young produced are also given to help.

____	Bobcat	A.	13 days; 3-14 young
____	Gray Squirrel	B.	30 days; 4-7 young
____	Beaver	C.	70 days; 4-9 young
____	Opossum	D.	55 days; 1-4 young
____	Skunk	E.	255 days; 1 young
____	Elk	F.	44 days; 3-5 young
____	Porcupine	G.	125 days; 1-6 plus young
____	Cottontail Rabbit	H.	210 days; 1 young

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Winn and the other hawkwatchers realized that much is yet to be learned about redtails, and they hoped to add to the scientific literature about them. Day after day, from dawn until sometimes long after dark, and year after year, from a bench in Central Park, they have trained their binoculars and spotting scopes on the apartment facade, keeping meticulous notes on the annual ritual of Pale Male and his mate's courtship, nest building, egg laying, hatching, raising and fledging of their family.



They, too, watch talon-drop, and they discovered that Pale Male usually presents his mate with a rat or pigeon before mating on roof ornaments, television antennas, balconies and railings for precisely five seconds. To build their nest, which is refurbished every year, the hawks pluck live twigs from red maple and London plane trees in the park and line it with bark stripped from park linden trees. Their permanent nest is on a curved ledge above the middle of three 12th floor windows, behind spokes of anti-pigeon wire. It is protected from the weather by an overhanging cornice and is oriented southwest just as most redtail nests are in the wild.

The hawkwatchers have also documented that Pale Male incubates the eggs a third as much as the female, a higher than usual time for male redtails, according to scientists. Fledging is a particularly exciting time as most of the chicks fly awkwardly from building to building and practice by taking short, flying jumps from one level of a building to another before launching out across the street and into the park. This often drawn-out, bumbling process keeps the hawkwatchers in a state of suspense for days.

Winn makes it clear that the hawkwatchers come from all walks of life — an advertising consultant, artists, a Jehovah's Witness minister, a newspaper vendor, dog-walkers (for the rich residents of the area), a Hollywood producer and many retirees. The apartments are part of what is called the Gold Coast because of the wealthy occupants. One apartment dweller and champion of the hawks is Mary Tyler Moore. Other well-heeled, but less well known, occupants send Winn detailed descriptions on watching the hawks plucking and eating birds on their window ledges, and at least one has invited the hawkwatchers to come up to her apartment for a closer look.

Woody Allen's balcony is directly across the street from the nest, and through the grapevine, Winn learned that he noticed the absence of pigeons in his rooftop garden, attributed it to the hawks' hunting prowess, and tried to entice them to nest on his terrace by building a hawk nesting platform.

But Pale Male has remained faithful to his original nest. So famous has he become that sightseeing tours make stops at the park to show tourists the nest. "The Fifth Avenue hawks," Winn says in a recent *Wall Street Journal* column, "had become New York superstars, . . . the most famous hawks in the world."

Perhaps writer Barbara Ascher, another hawkwatcher, best summed up what the hawks have meant to countless New Yorkers over the years in a prayer she wrote:

Dear God, Thank you for hawks
That have made us more than we were.
Thank you for opening our hearts.
As their shells opened, so did ours. □

By Mike Raykovicz

That old saying a chain is only as strong as its weakest link definitely applies to bowhunting. Paying attention to little details can add up to more venison on the table.

Little Things Mean a Lot

ALL BOWHUNTERS have items they consider necessary for each hunt. Basic items such as a drag rope, hunting knife, folding saw, pruning shears and safety belt are considered mandatory. There are other things, however, that each of us finds useful, items we would never go bowhunting without. To make matters worse, or better, depending on your point of view, manufacturers constantly tempt us by devising new gadgets that make us shoot straighter, see better or get more game. Picking up any outdoor catalog allows an outdoorsman the opportunity to spend hours thumbing through the pages, making a wish list of things to take afield on his next hunting trip. Much of that new equipment is nice to have, but hunters can carry only so much gear.



A SMALL first-aid kit takes up little room and can prove to be invaluable in case of a cut or other emergency.

Recommending what others should carry on a hunt is arbitrary at best, but I have a few things I think are absolutely indispensable for a safe, memorable hunt. The items I always have with me are lightweight and don't take up much room in my pockets. For that reason, I wouldn't go hunting without them.

Aside from the list of basic equipment, it's doubtful that all bowhunters carry exactly the same gear. But who among us would go afield without adding a haul line, toilet paper, scents or a grunt call to that list of essential items?

Traveling light is of the utmost importance to me, so I pack only the things that

keep me safe, comfortable, or help me find my way back to my vehicle. I don't hunt wilderness areas, and it's highly unlikely I'll have to spend the night in the woods, so survival items such as water purification tablets or signaling mirrors are not needed. However, I do carry a small whistle in case of an emergency. The whistle takes little effort to blow and its shrill tone can be heard over long distances. Accidents happen and more than one hunter has been hurt getting into or out of a treestand, so a signaling device can be a lifesaver. Keep in mind that in an emergency situation the whistle does little good tucked in a back pocket or hunting pack. I keep mine in a front shirt pocket in case it's needed. For safety, and because of its low cost and potential value, a whistle should be added to every hunter's list.

Most of my hunting is done in the evening after work, so having to follow a blood trail in the dark is not unusual for me. Following a blood trail on a moonless night across streams, through swamps, or over hills can sometimes disorient a hunter even in familiar territory. That's why a small pocket compass is mandatory.

About five years ago I placed an arrow behind the right shoulder of a nice 8-point buck. Despite the mortal wound, the buck took off running. It didn't take long to find the blood trail that took me over two hilltops and across several overgrown fields. When I found the deer, I field-dressed it and prepared to drag it back to my truck. I had a problem, though. Because of a new moon and heavy cloud cover, I faced a tar-black night with no idea where I was or how to get back to the truck. I had been so focused on finding the deer that I paid little attention to where the trail took me.

Several dirt roads snake through the areas I hunt, so finding my way out was not a serious concern. I may have been a long way from the truck, but spending a night in the woods was never an option. I knew I could head in almost any direction and ultimately cross a road but, unless I could retrace my trail overland, I faced an arduous dragging chore or at least a long, circuitous walk back. I didn't want to come home too late because I knew there would be concern for my safety.

Fortunately, after it was hit, the deer headed west and didn't double back on its trail. I took out my compass and headed east. Although it was totally dark under the forest canopy, it didn't take me long to find familiar landmarks. I saved several hours by going east back along my original route and avoided following a winding road a long way around the mountain.

Treestands are extremely popular; most bowhunters use them. Modern treestands are comfortable and safe, but none provide a place to put the bow while on watch. Some commercially made bow-holders are on the market, and they seem to work fairly well. The ones I've seen bolt to the bottom of the treestand but require some movement on the part of the hunter when reaching for the bow. I find this motion objectionable. Keeping movement to a minimum is imperative while bowhunting, so some hunters attach a commercially made bow hook to the tree trunk or a convenient limb. These hooks are generally coated with a rubber or plastic material, which minimizes noise. My objection to this arrangement is that it is not totally noiseless. Deer have a habit of appearing out of nowhere, and on quiet days they may hear the bow being lifted from the hook.

To combat this problem, I hang my bow from a piece of rope. My makeshift bow-hanger consists of a 20-inch length of 3/8-inch nylon rope. On one end I tie a large knot and then tie the other end to an overhead limb. Slipping the knot between the upper bow limb and cable allows the bow to hang in front of me rather than on either side. When a deer appears, I simply pick up the bow, allowing the heavy knot to fall silently out of the way. It's an arrangement I've used for nearly 20 years and have never been detected by a deer's ears.

The inexpensive rope can be purchased

at any farm supply or hardware store and has the added advantage of being practically indestructible, even if left out in the weather. At times I've forgotten to remove my rope hangers when I remove my treestand for the season. The next year the rope is still there, ready for another season of service.

Hunting heavy cover is the norm for bowhunters, so deer often appear at close range. To combat a deer's keen hearing, I take every precaution to noise-proof my equipment and myself. I don't like wearing rain gear during wet weather because it is noisy. Some will argue that deer won't hear the rustling of rain gear during a falling rain, but why risk the possibility?

I remain dry in wet weather by carrying a small, light, inexpensive, collapsible umbrella. Folded, the umbrella takes up little room in my pack. When rain threatens, I simply open it and suspend it in overhead limbs. The handle collapses into sections, so I just push the handle into itself and out of the way. Recently, commercial products have come on the market that do the same job, but they are considerably more expensive than my arrangement.

Umbrellas with a black, dark brown or neutral gray color work as well as the commercially made camouflage umbrellas. A quick spray of flat black paint eliminates the glare from the steel tubing on the handle. It's an excellent arrangement for all but the wettest weather.

When a deer approaches a hunter's stand, the immediate reaction is to grab the bow and get ready for the shot. Deer, however, are on no particular timetable and may mill about for a considerable time before presenting a shot. Holding the bow for more than a few minutes causes arm fatigue, possibly resulting in a poor or missed shot.

I wear a bow holster to keep my bow ready and to take the strain off my bow arm. The top of the holster attaches to my belt, and a stretch cord goes around my leg keeping the holster in place. Placing the lower bow limb in the holster allows the weight of the bow to be borne by the holster rather than the bow arm.



A BOW HOLSTER, often overlooked by many archers, is a great way to hold a bow when deer are near the stand.

Some brands of camouflage clothing have a sewn-in pocket below the knee of their pants that serves the same purpose, but the inexpensive holster does a better job. It's far more rugged and won't rip or tear. I'm surprised at how few hunters use bow holsters. I rely on mine so much that I would never think of hunting without one.

Because of thick, early season foliage, and for scouting purposes, I carry a pair of compact roof prism binoculars. When deer move through the trees out of bow range, the binoculars help determine if any are bucks. In addition, when I'm tracking a wounded deer, the binoculars save valuable daylight because I can quickly determine if a dark object ahead is a dead deer or just a stump. In the past, I've used inexpensive models and found the optical quality to be fine for my purposes, but they weren't durable. Constantly opening and folding the binoculars quickly wore out the hinges. Most inexpensive binoculars seem to last only a few seasons before coming apart.

Now, I use a pair of Leupold 9x25 pocket binoculars. They are somewhat expensive, but carry a lifetime warranty. Since I

bought them, they have more than paid for themselves in terms of recovered game and durability.

A whitetail's primary means of defense is its nose, so it's imperative that a hunter is aware of the wind. Even in windless conditions, air currents rise, fall and swirl, and deer use these thermals to their advantage. Consistently successful hunters are aware of these thermals and place their stands accordingly. I have several stands in place before the season opens, to take advantage of prevailing winds or wind currents. When there is a breeze, it's no trick to figure out the direction of where it's coming from, but air currents are another matter.

To test the wind, commercially made "puff bottles" containing a no-fragrance talc or similar material are available, but why bother? The common milkweed pod is readily available and free for the taking. I carry several dried pods in my hunting coat to check for unfelt air currents and thermals. Simply taking one of the milkweed seeds out of the pod and letting it float in the still air will show the direction of the slightest breeze and how the air currents are moving. I find it fascinating to watch the seeds rise and fall on the unseen thermals. Because deer approach an area from downwind, the milkweed tips me off as to the direction I can expect deer to come from.

A small first-aid kit should also have a place in every hunter's coat or pack. The kit doesn't need to be elaborate, just something to take care of minor emergencies should they arise.

I learned my lesson a few years ago while pruning some small branches from a hemlock tree in which I was hunting. In the process, I nicked my finger with the sharp saw blade. The wound bled a little, but I didn't think it was anything to worry about. A few weeks later, though, I was in a dermatologist's office having an open wound the size of a quarter biopsied. The doctor informed me that I had contacted a nasty sporal infection that traveled through my bloodstream and infected the skin on the opposite side of the cut. I was lucky the infection hadn't gotten any worse. Some extremely expensive antibiotic took care of the problem, but now I carry a small first-aid kit to treat small cuts. The kit is smaller than a pack of cigarettes and contains Band-Aids, aspirin, antiseptic solution, alcohol wipes and a vile of antiseptic cream for treating small cuts.

Most bowhunters carry a tracking light. After trying several that use a 6-volt lantern battery, I settled on a Browning 33mm Ballistic Lite. The light takes four alkaline D cell batteries and has a duel filament xenon lamp. The on-off switch can be locked in the off position, eliminating the possibility the batteries will be discharged by accidentally activating the switch before the light is needed. The light is waterproof and almost indestructible. Compared to a standard six-volt lantern with a standard flashlight bulb, the xenon bulb produces a sharp, white light that makes following a blood trail much easier. I've found this light eliminates all the problems I've had with cheaper lanterns of this type.

Field-dressing a deer under low-light or no-light situations is not an easy or pleasant task. After trying many times to field-dress a deer while holding or propping up my tracking light to shine where I needed it, I discovered a small, headlamp/flashlight combination to be ideal for this task. There are several models on the market, and they are available from most sporting goods catalogs. The light I use is powered by four AA batteries and features a tiltable head, spare lamp, locking on/off switch and a super bright krypton bulb, which — like my tracking light — is several times brighter than a standard flashlight bulb.

The light can be used as a flashlight, but it converts easily into a headlamp, allowing the hunter to keep his hands free. When dragging a deer out of the woods in the dark, the light can be worn on the head and positioned to shine just ahead of the hunter.

It's said people get wiser as they grow older, and I like to think I'm one of them. In the not too distant past, my elation over tagging a whitetail was tempered by the fact it had to be dragged back to my vehicle.

I've dragged more than a few deer for long distances over rough terrain and through heavy brush. As a young man this was never a problem. As I got older, though, the chore seemed to become more difficult. I wondered if there might be a better way. There is.

For me, using an ATV for getting a deer out of the woods is not an option. First of all, I don't own one and, secondly, I hunt private agricultural land. Landowners do not appreciate anyone driving over, or walking through, field crops for any reason. I walk into my hunting area along fences or field edges and try to take a deer out the same way.

To make this chore easier, I bought a commercially made deer carrier that I leave in the truck. There are several models on the market and all work well. The one I bought is constructed of 1/8-inch aluminum and weighs just 12 pounds. It will accommodate even the largest deer and collapses for storage or transportation. I find it works perfectly in rough terrain, through swamps or when crossing small creeks.

After field-dressing a deer and tagging it, I walk back to my truck, drop off my bow and any unneeded clothing. I wheel the deer carrier back to where I left the animal, load it on the carrier and wheel it back. I have found this arrangement allows me to get a deer out of the woods much quicker than dragging it. When I get back to my truck, I'm guaranteed that the deer carcass is clean, as it has not been dragged through mud or woodland detritus.

Memories are a big part of every hunt and to preserve them I carry a small 35mm camera in my shirt pocket. Modern cameras are miniature marvels and take wonderful pictures. In my opinion there is no substitute for having a picture of a trophy taken in a woodland setting where the animal fell. Too many hunters wait until they get home to take pictures of their deer. Many of these photos show the animal in someone's front yard, hanging from a meat pole, or draped over the tailgate of a pickup. They may show the deer, but they are not esthetically pleasing.



A LIGHT that can be worn on the head is perfect for field-dressing deer under low, or no, light conditions.

I use a Canon Sure-Shot with a built-in telephoto lens. The camera has a self-timer that allows me to set the scene, push the shutter release button and get into the picture. Expect to pay more than $150 for a camera like this, but if that is a tad expensive, Canon and other manufacturers offer less expensive models containing fewer features. Just be sure the camera you choose has a built-in flash and a self-timer feature.

Each of us have items we deem essential, and their use is limited only to how much we want to carry with us into the woods. The items I've mentioned take up little room and, except for the binoculars and camera, are inexpensive or free. Thinking of new things to invent or to bring along on the next hunt seems to make the time spent on watch go faster. Little things mean a lot, and these small items make my season safer and more enjoyable. □

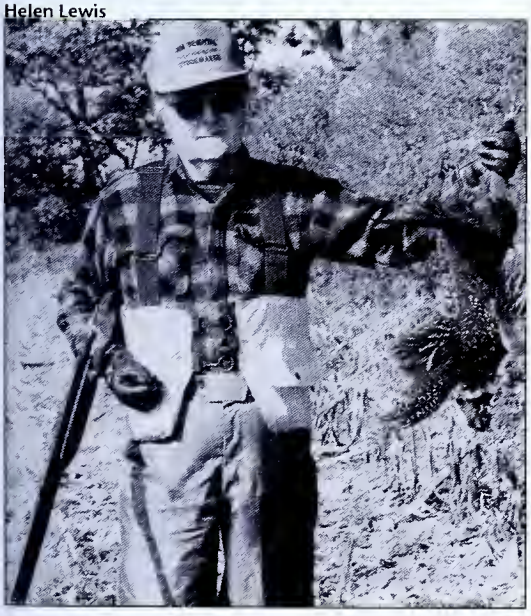
Old perceptions die hard, such as a 12-gauge shoots harder than a 20, or a full choke is a good choice in the rabbit and grouse thickets. Here's the scoop for sorting out some of those misconceptions.

Scattergun Miscellany

MY BEAGLE, Rip, was pushing the rabbit at a fast pace. The chase was on an abandoned surface mine covered with pine trees of all sizes. The bunny was running in a circle more than a half-mile in diameter, and at one point it crossed a snow-covered hillside 300 yards away. From Rip's mournful howls, I could tell the dog was closing in and that the wary rabbit was headed back.

I was standing on a large rock overlooking a deep cut about 40 yards wide. The hillside across from me had plenty of openings, but it would be a long shot. I was using my 12-gauge Mossberg 500 pump equipped with Mossberg's C-Lect adjustable choke system.

Helen Lewis



I caught a glimpse of the rabbit coming through the pines on the opposite hillside, so I quickly unloaded and turned the choke to full. I closed the action on a reload stuffed with 1 1/4-ounces of number 4 shot. The rabbit hit an opening across from me before I could put a second shell in the magazine tube, but as I swung past the rabbit and slapped the trigger, it bulldozed to a stop. I figured the distance was close to 50 yards.

That shot had some luck involved, but the reloaded shell I fired was the result of plenty of range testing. I must admit my load combination can't be found in reloading manuals, but I also want to stress that I did not exceed the suggested maximum powder charge for the type of powder used. I wasn't familiar with pressure testing back in the late 1960s, but I knew from experi-

A FULL CHOKE is not necessary, and in fact a handicap, for most small game hunting situations in Pennsylvania. An improved cylinder/modified choke combination in double barrel shotguns is a good choice for most small game hunting here.

ence and research that it's dangerous to add powder above the maximum amounts shown in reloading manuals. In fact, the dozens of pressure tests I've done with rifles on the Oehler Model 43 Personal Ballistic Laboratory (PBL) proved that maximum powder charges in some rifles often exceeded the 60,000 psi that is generally accepted as the high pressure limit for all rifle cartridges.

For instance, I pressure tested the same maximum load combination in three .22-250 rifles. Two of the rifles stayed below the 60,000 psi mark when the max loads were fired, but chamber pressure in the third averaged a little more than 66,000 psi. In fact, I had to cut the powder charge significantly to get under the 60,000 psi figure. That particular rifle's chamber pressure readings were higher than the other two rifles throughout all the tests.

I'm not certain what caused this, but I suspect that this rifle's internal specifications were different. I didn't try to guess what the problem was with that .22-250; I simply cut back on the powder in the cartridges I shoot through it.

In the shotgun realm, we are still living with many myths from the past. There are still those who argue that the 12-gauge shoots harder than the 16 or 20. It's also believed that the pattern from a 12-gauge is larger than those tossed by the 20 and 16. Those beliefs are firmly imbedded, but they are false. Shot patterns from all gauges are roughly the same size; it's the shot density in the pattern that varies.

Unfortunately, the 16-gauge has been relegated to the sidelines. Not because it wasn't doing a good job in the field, but because the 3-inch 20-gauge could duplicate the 16's load combinations, and the 20 appealed to young shooters and those who disliked the recoil of the 16- and 12-gauge outfits. In my opinion, the 16-gauge is the best all around shotshell available. That statement is hard for me to explain because I've hunted with the 20-gauge since 1937. The 16-gauge can do anything a 3-inch 20 can do and is almost on par with the larger 12-gauge. Some reloading buffs come right out and say the 16 can match the performance of the 12. I'm not convinced of that because it would be pretty hard to stuff the 1⅞-ounces of shot that's in a 3-inch 12-gauge into the 16-gauge's 2¾-inch case. However, a 1¼-ounce load works nicely in the 16.

Shotgun hunters tend to put too much emphasis on gauges anyway. The truth is that velocities from all gauges are similar, running from around 1,100 to 1,350 fps. As already stated, pattern diameters remain relatively the same among all the gauges. In other words, a full choke 28-inch 20-gauge barrel produces a pattern diameter that is roughly the same as one from a 28-inch full choke 12-gauge barrel. Keep in mind that it's the choke constriction, not the gauge or load, that determines the rate of pattern spread. It may be a bit hard for dedicated 12-gauge fans to swallow, but a 28-inch full choke barrel produces the same pattern diameter regardless of the gauge.

I'm not trying to take a middle-of-the-road stance when I say that this applies to barrels that are properly choked. There are variations in choke constrictions, and the choke constriction stamped on the barrel may not be precisely what the choke actually is. To find out how a shotgun patterns, it must be fired several times from a solid rest. It's possible that the modified stamping on the barrel may actually be throwing full choke patterns. Normally, the accepted pattern density of a full choke barrel is 70 percent in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards. There are approximately 281 pellets in a 1¼-ounce load of number 6 shot — an overall favorite among small game hunters — so a full choke pattern should have 195 pellet holes.

Because there are no significant differences in velocities and pattern diameters among the gauges, the 12-gauge 2¾-inch standard shell is not vastly superior to either the 16- or 20-gauge. I realize this is

pretty thin ice to be skating on but, from a ballistic viewpoint, this statement is well grounded. The big difference among the gauges is shot charge weight. The larger shells hold more shot.

I'm aware that a 1¼-ounce 3-inch 20-gauge load exits the muzzle at more than 1,200 fps. That's in the same velocity range as a 2¾-inch 12-gauge using 1¼-ounces of shot. It's worth noting that a 3-inch 12-gauge load can generate a similar velocity with 1⅝ ounces of shot. With number 6 shot, the 1⅝-ounce load has 115 more pellets than a 1¼-ounce load. Going back to the 70 percent figure, the 1⅝-ounce charge would have 60 more pellets inside the 30-inch circle. That's significant. Why? Because the hunter has to depend on pattern density.

Unlike a rifle that fires a single projectile that can be accurately guided to an exact spot, the shotgun tosses several hundred single pellets. The pellets that are not deformed in the forcing cone or flattened going through the bore will stay pretty much on course. The deformed and flattened pellets — called fliers — usually spiral away from the main shot charge. It's impossible to guide a pellet accurately. The hunter has to depend on pattern density. The more pellets that fly true, the denser the pattern, and the more pellets that strike the target, the greater the chance for a clean kill. A pattern's uniformity depends a good bit on the choke constriction.

Choke is a complex subject. There are many types and various methods for installing choke in a barrel. First, a barrel that has no choke constriction (just a straight tube) commonly makes a "donut-type" pattern. In other words, there will be a hole in the center. Maybe the best way to put it is to say that the pattern is not evenly spread and has many gaps in its middle. Choke constriction squeezes the shot charge into a compact mass that travels farther from the barrel before breaking up. It's easy to understand that when the shot charge exits the barrel it starts to spread out. Choke constriction governs, to some extent, how quickly it will spread.

For instance, an improved cylinder choke tube allows the shot charge to spread rather quickly. A modified choke slows the spreading process down, and a full choke compacts the shot charge into a tight mass that travels still farther from the muzzle before opening up.

I won't get into the choke-making process, but it's a matter of putting a predetermined amount of constriction (making an area close to the muzzle smaller than the main bore) a few inches from the muzzle. This compacts the shot charge so it won't break up. However, too much choke is worse than no choke. Too much choke tends to rip up the shot charge, and there's no semblance of pattern density.

The entire philosophy of choke is to make a shot charge stick together over a long distance. I've already said that a full choke should put 70 percent or more of its total pellet count in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards. Modified choking would be somewhat less, improved cylinder even less, and a pure cylinder bore has a pattern diameter of around five feet at 30 yards. Full choke is too tight for shots under 30 yards. Modified or improved cylinder should be the choice of small game hunters whose shots seldom reach beyond 30 yards.

My favorite rabbit and grouse shotgun is a double-barrel outfit bored improved cylinder and modified. Improved cylinder produces a wide dense pattern at 25 yards, and modified will easily make clean kills at 35 yards. Probably 99 percent of rabbit, grouse and woodcock shooting is done under 35 yards. A full choke simply defeats the purpose. Turkey hunters need a full choke, but hunters after small game, including waterfowl, will benefit from using improved cylinder and modified chokes. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

The timber wolf population in Wisconsin increased to about 200 wolves in 54 packs from an estimated 180 wolves in 46 packs in 1998.

Pushed to the brink of extinction in the early 1900s, the whooping crane is making a steady recovery, thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the International Crane Foundation. From a low of 15 birds in the entire world, the population now is 265 birds in the wild and 132 in captivity, all in North America.

A bill allowing states in the Mississippi and Central flyways to implement light goose (snow and Ross' geese) population control measures for the winter and spring 2000 has been signed by President Clinton. The Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish a conservation order that would allow the taking of snow, blue and Ross' geese after March 10. The act also reinstates the use of normally prohibited electronic calls and unplugged shotguns for taking light geese, provided all other waterfowl and crane seasons are closed. The conservation measures were withdrawn last May after a legal challenge by the Humane Society. Prior to Congressional action, the USFWS had to complete an Environmental Impact Statement before offering another conservation order to states. Now, the USFWS can allow conservation order seasons while they continue to work on the impact statement, scheduled for completion in May 2001.

Hunters in North Dakota in 1998 took 106 moose, 87 elk and 7 bighorn sheep — all rams. Hunter success rates, respectively, were 85 percent, 60 percent and 88 percent.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the average number of days sportsmen hunt various game species per season are: deer, 12; geese, ducks and rabbits, 9; turkeys, squirrels, quail and pheasants, 8; and elk and bear, 7.

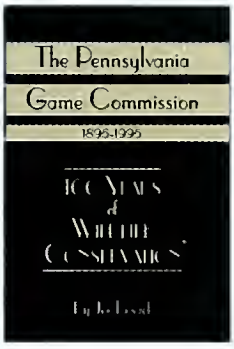
According to a recent survey, the moose population in New Hampshire is estimated at 9,600.

Hunters took 291,000 geese in North Dakota in 1998 — a three percent decrease from the 300,000 taken in 1997. Canada geese made up 54 percent of the harvest, followed by snow geese, 45 percent, and white-fronts, one percent.

Results of the 1998-99 winter wolf survey in Michigan confirmed that at least 174 wolves in at least 30 packs are scattered across the Upper Peninsula. Wolves have increased in the Upper Peninsula from near extinction in the 1970s to their present numbers. It is believed that all wolves now in Michigan either are descendents of Michigan breeding wolves or are the result of immigration from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ontario, Canada.

Answers: D, F, G, A, C, E, H, B.

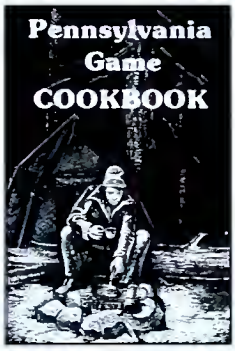
PGC Books



Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, *by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.*
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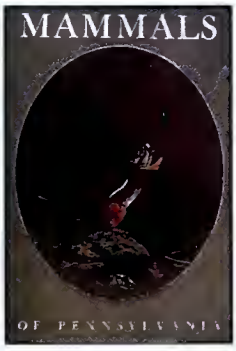
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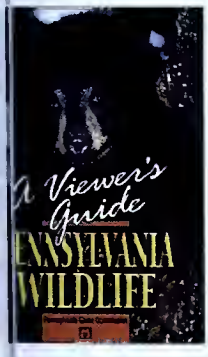
Pennsylvania Game Cookbook *is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.*
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Gone for the Day *is a compilation of* Game News *columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.*
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Mammals of Pennsylvania, *by J. Kenneth Doutt et.al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.*
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Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, *by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.*
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Pennsylvania Big Game Records, 1965-1986, *lists the state's official trophy deer and bear records, along with many stories of exciting hunts.*
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Prices include handling and postage. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make check or money order (no cash, please) payable to Pennsylvania Game Commission and send to Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Items may now be ordered over the phone, Visa or MasterCard accepted, by calling 1-888-888-3459.

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(from Set No.2)

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Birds of prey
(from Set No.1)

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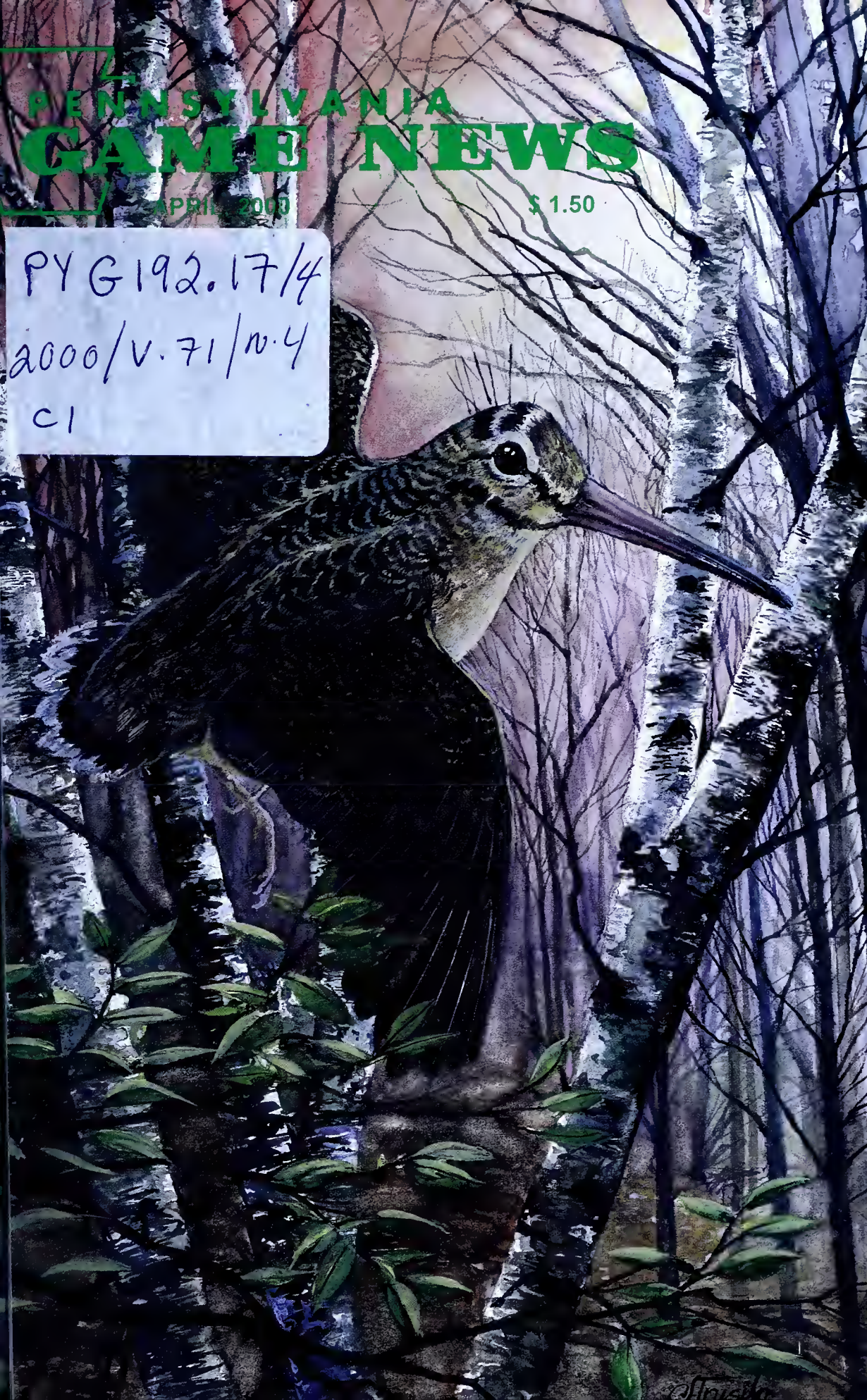
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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

Volume 71 ● No. 4

APRIL 2000

(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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From the 25th Class

William M. Williams

25TH Class Spokesperson

FROM ITS INCEPTION in 1895, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has protected and preserved, enhanced and propagated, Pennsylvania's wildlife. The agency is steeped in tradition and long on accomplishments. Each of us graduating here today once shared a goal of becoming a wildlife conservation officer. Today, that goal has been realized. At the outset, the odds were not in our favor. The road to the training school allows only a select few to arrive at its final destination. Just 536 graduates have preceded us throughout the school's distinguished 64-year history. Their images are captured in class photographs that line the main hall. They speak to us of tradition and remind us of our duty to serve our citizens and protect our state's wildlife resources. We are proud to join the ranks of the men and women who have come before us.

The first step in being considered for entrance into the school begins with a Civil Service written examination. As in the past, a staggering number of hopeful candidates compete. After an initial cut, those scoring high enough are invited to take part in a verbal examination. These several hundred are then reduced to a mere 50 to 60, who are then interviewed by a 7-member board at the Game Commission headquarters. Of those, about half will then undergo thorough background investigations, physical examinations, and fitness evaluations.

The time of application to final determination takes more than nine months. Through this process, written correspondence from the commission to candidates still in the running contains the encouraging, but not definitive words, "You are eligible for further consideration." Finally there comes a day that few WCOs are likely to forget. That is the day when a piece of mail finally arrives with the phrase "further consideration" conspicuously missing. In its place are "Congratulations, you have been accepted . . ."

Classes at the school are many and diverse, providing students with the wide range of skills expected of today's wildlife conservation professional. Graduates of Ross Leffler leave the school with a solid knowledge of law enforcement, wildlife management, land management, dendrology, ornithology, mammalogy, education and public relations.

Instructors include staff and resident instructors, representatives from the commission bureaus, other state conservation and law enforcement agencies, and salaried WCOs. A vitally important component of our training is time spent in the field under the direction of Field Training Officers. These men and women provided us with hands-on training in all aspects of a WCO's duties, during often strenuous field conditions. They offered us their expertise, related valuable experiences, and shared their homes with us during our 10 weeks afield. And in return, we provided them with a seemingly endless supply of Field Note material. It was encouraging for us to witness the high degree of dedication and passion these individuals directed into their vocation after years of service.

Continued on page 45

Adapted from remarks presented at the graduation ceremonies for the 25th class of wildlife conservation officers from the Ross Leffler School of Conservation on March 4, 2000, at the Middletown High School Auditorium.

letters

Editor:

My oldest son filled his buck and antlerless deer tags in archery season. My youngest son, who is 12, and I did not get any deer, but it wasn't the deers' fault; we saw plenty. I consider my hunting license money to be the best money I ever spent. Please accept this heartfelt thanks for providing me the priceless opportunity to spend time in the woods with my sons.

L. LaFaver,
Mohrsville

Editor:

Pass on my thanks to Linda Steiner for her "Tales the Trees Tell," in the December issue. She certainly broadened my knowledge and interest in this highly valuable resource.

J. Rembis,
Swoyersville

Editor;

On Dec. 29, I was one of the lucky individuals selected for the special flintlock season at Middle Creek, and I just wanted to say that the personnel were most helpful and eager to assist hunters with deer, and that it was a most enjoyable day.

P. Burkhart,
Myerstown

Editor:

I would like to commend the Game Commission, and Deputy Bill Angove in particular, for the considerations given physically challenged hunters. Bill, who helps me with woodchuck problems around my home, made a point to let me know all about the permit that allows certain people to hunt from a vehicle.

R. Spalding,
Troy

Editor:

I agree with Vic Attardo's statement in the November issue that hunters are not likely to find corn in rabbits' stomachs, but I know rabbits eat corn. For more than a year one came to our patio and ate rabbit pellets and corn from ears I put out.

R. Steadman,
Knoxville

Editor:

I noticed the Working Together for Wildlife painting is "Star Barn Owls. Why is the patch I received a screech owl?

D.E. Bratz,
Mapleton Depot

After an owl was selected to be the 2000 WTFW feature, Nick Rosato was asked to do a screech owl design for the patch, which had to be in production by late summer to be available by the end of the year. The print design was selected from a competition in which entrants were given the option of painting an owl of their choice. As it turned out, the barn owl was the species on the winning entry, selected in October.

Editor:

Growing up in Monroe County, one thing I enjoyed as much as chasing rabbits and deer was the monthly *Game News*. Now living in New York, the end of each month still finds me anxiously awaiting *Game News*. Please don't ever change the format and content.

I currently have a collection of almost 40 years' issues, and was wondering if there was anywhere to purchase missing copies.

W.H. Green,
Saugerties, NY

Glad you've enjoyed our magazine for so long. Rest assured, if we do make any format or content changes, it will be to make the magazine even better. The best way I know of obtaining back issues is to visit flea markets or to run an ad in the classified section of a local paper. I realize, though, that this is likely to be difficult for a person living outside of Pennsylvania.

Editor:

Just two complaints. I hunt a lot of evenings after work and am frustrated by the legal shooting hours ending at sunset rather than a half hour after sunset, which can be the most productive time to hunt.

Second, I think hunters should be allowed to shoot foxes, like they are coyotes, without having a furtakers license.

J. Martin,
Lititz

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Gobbler Hunting Then & Now

ONE HAS to wonder how the pilgrims ever bagged wild turkeys for their Thanksgiving dinners. We can't manage to hunt spring gobblers without a decoy that moves, at least four sets of camouflage outfits, a 3-reed, split-v diaphragm call, as well as double-reed, triple-reed stacked, 4-reed raspy and magnum cutter calls. Can we possibly succeed without a slate call, aluminum, stainless steel, and/or fiberglass call? Not to mention walnut, poplar, pine, one-sided, two-sided, gobbler, hen, boat paddle, mini boat paddle and gobbler box calls? Don't forget, of course, five types of tube calls and at least one wingbone yelper, plus headnets, hat covers, owl, peacock, hawk and/or coyote howlers — the latter just to locate birds. And then there are the fannypacks, backpacks, vests and/or sling bags, so we can tote it all with us. And last but not least, precisely choked shotguns with camouflaged stocks stoked with special "turkey loads."

The pilgrims had none of these items, yet the Pennsylvania turkey hunter in the new millennium considers the above gear to be basic necessities. Of course, our forefathers didn't have to limit their turkey hunting to a few particular weeks or share the woods with a couple hundred thousand other hunters. The most numerous and drastic changes in turkey hunting, however, did not occur from the time of the pilgrims until now, but from 1968, when Pennsylvania introduced spring gobbler hunting.

Few in 1968 imagined how interest would explode after that first season. Or that an entire industry would spring up to supply the paraphernalia turkey hunters would demand. The comeback of the wild turkey in Pennsylvania — and, in fact, nationwide — has been called the conservation feat of the century. Few would argue.

As the 2000 spring gobbler season approaches, more than 200,000 hunters will gear up for the hunt. Besides assembling all our gear, we'll watch six or seven hunting videos, attend at least one seminar on how to call, visit the outdoor show to acquire any and all new calls and equipment, and agonize over which of the half dozen new camouflage patterns to buy.

More than 30 years ago, when Pennsylvania hunters set out to hunt gobblers in the spring for the first time, few had any idea how to do it. We had one Lynch box call, as a rule, and perhaps a homemade mouth or wingbone call. We wore the same clothes we wore to hunt fall turkeys and tried to hunt spring birds like we did turkeys in the fall.

During that first season, hunters could

By Shirley Grenoble


DOUG PIFER

rattle stones in a tin can and gobblers would come running. Our biggest problem was deciding which of the three or four gobblers that showed up to shoot. Thirty years later, even though turkey populations have increased substantially, our dilemma will be whether we can bring even one gobbler to the gun during the entire season.

Few outdoor sports have undergone as many radical changes in such a short time as has spring turkey hunting. The first hurdle was that many hunters bitterly opposed hunting gobblers in the spring, believing it would wipe out turkey flocks.

Biologists assured hunters that managing turkey flocks is similar to managing deer herds: The key is in controlling the harvest of hens, not gobblers. Because one gobbler breeds with many hens, there are many more toms than are needed for reproduction. We saw it happen: After a few years of spring hunting, turkey populations were not just flourishing, but mushrooming.

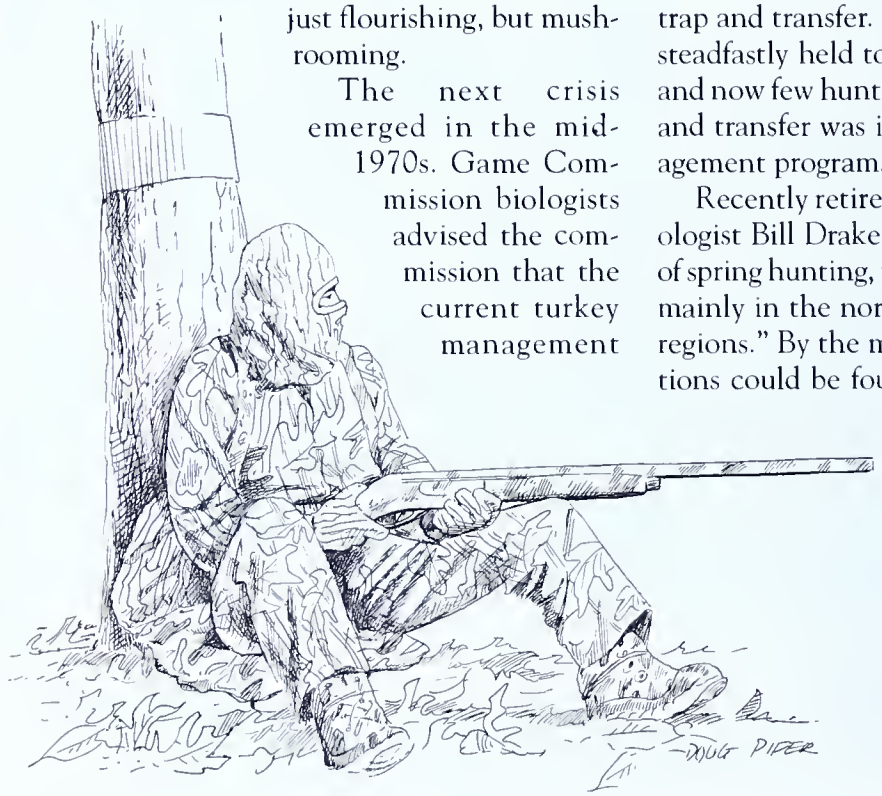
The next crisis emerged in the mid-1970s. Game Commission biologists advised the commission that the current turkey management program of propagating turkeys on game farms and releasing them prior to hunting seasons was not wise. Game-farm turkeys were not genetically wild enough to survive long term, did not establish resident flocks and were an expensive put-and-take commodity. They urged that game farms be closed and that the trap and transfer program used successfully by other states be implemented.

Again, Pennsylvania hunters zealously opposed closing the game farms. The newly formed Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation mounted a campaign in support of trap and transfer. After years of controversy, the Game Commission in 1981 closed down the turkey farms and instituted trap and transfer. Turkeys were trapped by cannon nets at bait sites and transferred to suitable habitat that had no resident flocks.

Rumors abounded that Game Commission personnel were trapping every turkey in one place to replant them in another (a claim that made no sense at all). Netting sites were booby-trapped and public meetings were catch basins of criticism about trap and transfer. The Game Commission steadfastly held to their position, though, and now few hunters would argue that trap and transfer was indeed the correct management program.

Recently retired Game Commission biologist Bill Drake said, "In the early years of spring hunting, flocks were concentrated mainly in the northeast and northcentral regions." By the mid-1990s turkey populations could be found in every part of the state, so hunting pressure was also evenly distributed.

"We learned that turkeys could flourish in what we once believed to be marginal habitat. They survive as well close to civilization as they do in heavy forest. If



we trap wild birds and release them in good habitat they naturally spread out," Drake said.

In 1971, the spring gobbler harvest was 7,000. By 1981, it had risen to 10,000. By 1991, harvests averaged 14,000 yearly. From 1991-97 spring harvests averaged nearly 27,000 turkeys. There were an estimated 32,661 bearded birds taken in the spring of 1998 — a long way from the estimated 1,636 birds taken in 1968.

In 1968 turkey hunters were considered specialists, a close-mouthed breed, stingy about sharing information. That quickly changed. As spring hunting caught on, hunters demanded calling devices and camouflage clothes that would give a little advantage over the turkey's phenomenal eyesight.

Manufacturers responded: Boy, did they ever. These days we have any kind of call imaginable, more varieties of camouflage clothing than we can possibly assimilate, and videos and more videos that make it all look deceptively easy.

Thirty years later the demand for equipment has gone far beyond calls, now we "need" decoys, headnets, gloves, special guns and shotgun shells, vests, pillows and locator calls. Today, a hunter wanting to start turkey hunting faces a mind-boggling array of gear from which to choose.

Thirty years ago one could scarcely find a single magazine article about turkey hunting. Now, a dozen or more publications are devoted entirely to turkey hunting strategies and gear. In 1968 a hunter could find few sources of reliable information, but today, videos, cassettes, seminars and TV programs offer such a glut of information, novices are baffled just trying to sort through it all. Far from being secretive, today's turkey hunter, it seems, can't wait to tell you all he knows. Spring turkey hunting has become big business.

In the process, however, we outsmarted ourselves. No one has worked harder than Pennsylvania hunters have in making it difficult on themselves. Pennsylvania has a reputation as the state with one of the highest turkey populations, yet being the hardest state in which to bag a gobbler. How did this happen? Hunters were intoxicated by the sounds and sights of spring hunting: Gobblers thundering at first light, strutting, puffing, drumming; gorgeous stuff for the video cameras, and it seemed that every third hunter had to do his filming before the season.

We started our "scouting" six to eight weeks before the season, and our techniques involved, not just looking for tracks, roosts and feeding areas, and listening for gobbling birds then creeping away. Too many of us practiced our calling by bringing in and spooking bird after bird. We gloried (and still do) in traveling back roads, stopping at the same pull-off to get out and blare owl hoots and crow calls. Then when seasons came in, we couldn't understand why the birds ignored our calls, why they would gobble on the roost but shut up when they flew down, and why they would come so far to our calls and no farther. We didn't (and often still don't) understand that what we were really doing with all the preseason antics was alerting the birds that the enemy had learned to speak their language, conditioning them that most of the "sexy hens" calling from the bushes were phonies.

Not only has all the hoopla conditioned gobblers to mostly ignore it, the amazing success of the trap and transfer program in reestablishing turkey flocks statewide means that gobblers have more hens with them all season than they can handle. We have pounded them with calling and hunting pressure so much that most gobblers have adopted the defense that if they can't see the hen, they are not going to look for her.

It became increasingly clear that just plopping under a tree and crank-

ing out some pattern of calls an "expert" told us about at a seminar was not working. Hunters began to develop arsenals of tricks, mainly strategies to lure lovesick gobblers away from their harems.

Add to the mix the increase in the coyote population. Turkeys learned that if they stand around and gobble recklessly, a coyote is apt to slink in and jump on them, so they've adapted by gobbling no more than they must to attract hens or announce their territories.

It didn't take long for success at spring gobbler hunting to become a new status symbol. Spring hunting had become so tough, so challenging, so intricate that those consistently successful at it became (we are back to square one here) "specialists." Peer pressure became great, as every hunter strove to be part of the elite: a gobbler hunter. Thousands of hunters tramping the woods, working calls and striving for status gave birth to a serious situation: turkey-related hunting incidents. Hunters were shooting other hunters in mistake for turkeys.

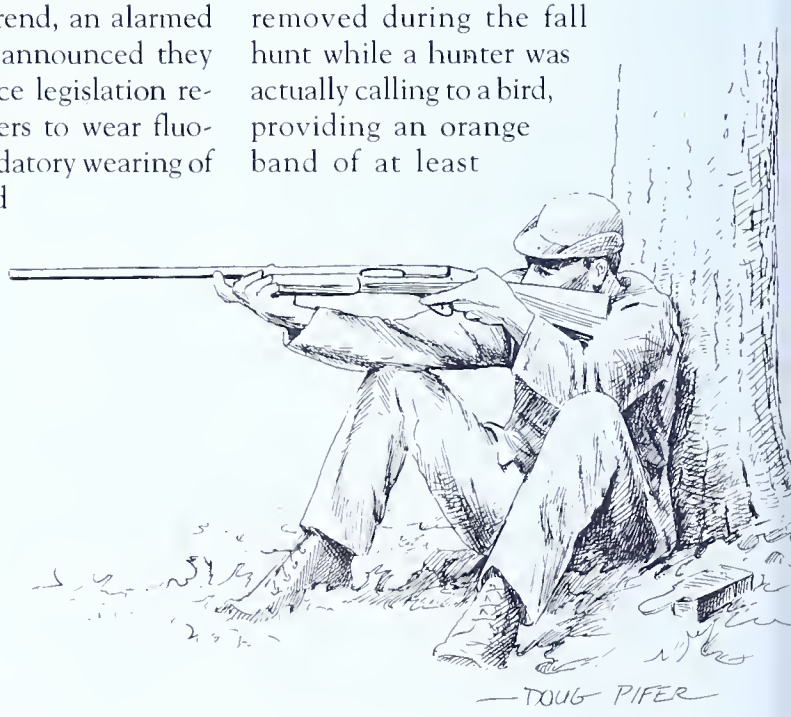
To combat this trend, an alarmed Game Commission announced they intended to introduce legislation requiring turkey hunters to wear fluorescent orange. Mandatory wearing of orange had reduced other types of hunting incidents, most notably deer hunting. Surely it would do the same for turkey hunting.

The reaction to this announcement could be called the atomic explosion of conservation. A bitter debate raged. Hunters declared that turkeys, with their radar-sharp eyesight, their chief defense against enemies, would never approach a hunter who was wearing orange, no matter how expertly that hunter could call. Opposition to this proposal hit the Game Commission from all sides, and most of us who hunt turkeys well remember the fight.

Once again the Game Commission stuck to its guns and the fall 1992 season had a new regulation. All fall turkey hunters were required to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange, visible from all sides. In the spring, hunters would be required to wear 100 square inches of fluorescent orange while moving in the woods, but would be allowed to remove the orange when actually set-up and calling to a turkey.

No doubt this was one of the most unpopular laws ever enacted by the Game Commission, and while most hunters complied, some hunters simply refused to wear the orange while calling turkeys. It was a revolt and an issue that would not go away.

In 1995 the Game Commission compromised a bit, and the orange regulation was amended to allow it to be removed during the fall hunt while a hunter was actually calling to a bird, providing an orange band of at least



100 square inches was posted within 15 feet of the calling location. Turkey hunters have adjusted to these orange requirements, albeit grudgingly, now seeing them as a "law we can live with."

Other changes that were looked at included a 2-bird bag limit for spring gobblers, and a special turkey stamp to be implemented. Biologists tell us that allowing hunters to bag two birds in the spring would have no significant impact on turkey populations, because managing hens is still the way to control turkey populations, but there are social factors to consider.

A turkey stamp could be used to identify and regulate turkey hunters and provide money for research and education.

Naturally, there are hunters lined up on both sides of those two questions.

Our grandfather's problem was finding turkeys. Once he did find them, however, they weren't wary and suspicious and were fairly easy to call in. Today, more than 30 years since spring gobbler seasons began, finding turkeys is the least of our problems. Turkeys are everywhere. Getting them to pay any attention to us is our problem. We have pounded turkeys so hard that the experts are telling us to ease up and hunt them like our forefathers did. Namely, with more finesse and improving woodsmanship skills. Seems we've come full circle.

By altering preseason scouting methods and improving woodsmanship skills, Pennsylvania spring turkey hunters can change exasperation to joy. ☐

Instrumental in Pennsylvania's turkey restoration program is the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Formed in 1975, the group now consists of 62 local chapters and more than 15,000 members. Since 1985, the state chapter has spent more than $1.6 million on wild turkey related projects in the state.

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What's become of most of the eagles the Game Commission raised and released in the 1980s is unknown, but two of the birds settled along Pine Creek. Here's their story . . .

The Bald Eagles of Pine Creek Canyon

By Ed Reish

DURING the later half of the 20th century, because of environmental contamination and degradation, many birds of prey began to drastically decline. As their numbers diminished, we began to realize we had best start taking care of this old earth. DDT was banned and habitat improvements occurred, and then came the reintroduction projects.

In the 1980s, the Game Commission launched a bald eagle restoration project. Young eagles were taken from their nests in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, raised in artificial nests here, at Shohola in Pike County and Haldeman Island in Dauphin County, and then released into the wild. From 1983-89, 88 eagles were raised and released here. What's become of most of these birds is unknown, but two have set up residence along Pine Creek in Tioga County. Following is what we know of this pair.

Cecil Houser of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has been keeping detailed records of the Pine Creek area. In 1984 he started keeping tabs on a pair of bald eagles in the valley. What follows comes from Cecil's records and from information he received from others, including Chuck Dillon of Pine Creek Outfitters; Stephen Sushinski and Bob Bailey, cabin owners at Blackwell; and WCO John Snyder and (at the time) Deputy Jim Bokus.

I am a wildlife rehabilitator, and I became involved with the Pine Creek eagles in 1998, when one of two chicks produced that year couldn't fly.

While eagles seemed to have set up residence along Pine Creek earlier, it wasn't until 1987 that the first nest was discovered. It was in a large white pine. Apparently, one young fledged. When Deputy Jim Bokus told his friend Dave Webster of this discovery, Dave was determined to check it out. In 1988 Dave got out on a point where he could see the nest. Both adults were visible, along with one chick, and Dave thought he could make out something on one of the adult's wing. The eaglet fledged that year.

In 1989, reports in mid-May indicated an eaglet was in the nest, but after a week passed without the bird being seen, PGC wildlife technicians Cal Butchkowski and Alan Keister, along with Cecil, climbed the steep west slope to locate and climb to the nest. The three men passed under the nest several times before district forester Jack Sherwood, stationed at the observation

point, was able to direct them to it. While Cal climbed to the nest, Cecil found the young eaglet, dead, in a rock crevice below the nest. It seemed to have fallen from the nest, probably when five or six weeks old. 1989 was not a good year for the eagles, but those things happen, and there was one bright spot.



RED AND GREEN wing marker on this young eagle is similar to the one seen on a Pine Creek eagle by Dave Webster in 1989. This was the first evidence that at least one bird had come from the Pennsylvania reintroduction project.

Watching the eagles that year, Dave Webster was sure he saw a wing marker. The following year, armed with a new 1,000 mm lens, Dave got a picture of the adult eagle with a red and blue wing marker (The wing marker was red and green.). This was the first evidence we had that at least one bird had come from the Pennsylvania reintroduction project. The tag dropped off the eagle in May 1990.

1990 was much better. Thanks to photographs and periodic updates published anonymously by Dave in the local newspaper, interest in the Pine Creek eagles grew. That year one young eaglet, in its efforts to learn to fly, tore the nest apart. Later that year, Game Commission and Bureau of Forestry personnel placed a plywood platform in the nest tree. The adult eagles watched as this was being done, and then never went back to that tree.

In 1991 the birds built a new nest, in another white pine not far from the first. According to Cecil and Dave's information, two eggs hatched, but one chick died after a few days. Dave and Cecil watched the female move the dead chick around in the nest. The male and female could be distinguished by subtle plumage differences, and the female is slightly larger.

There was a drought that year, and with the stream level low, fishing was easy, and the remaining youngster received plenty to eat. Dave tells me that one day the male was perched near the nest when a common merganser flew by, making its usual call. It wasn't long until "Poppa" brought that duck back to the nest and plopped it down in front of junior. The young eagle wasn't sure what was in front of him, as it would look at "Dad" then back to the duck. The male was perched on a limb next to the nest, and he would look down once in awhile but wouldn't help the young bird. Before long, though, feathers started to fly as the youngster got its first taste of duck.

With all the food this lone eaglet received, it grew fast, big and strong. One day, apparently tired of just flapping its wings and jumping from limb to limb around the nest, the young bird flew out to the end of a long branch that hung over the steep side hill. Landing near the end of the limb, the bird found itself perched far above the mountainside. Seemingly out of shear

At press time, Ed Reish reports that the female is incubating this year. How many eggs she may have or lay, however, is not yet known.

fright, the young bird gripped the limb with its talons, tried to wrap its wings around the limb, and then grabbed hold of it with his beak. After a few short breaths, it crawled back to the nest and took a nap. This young eagle finally fledged on August 10, but not before destroying its nest.

In 1992, the adults constructed another new nest, in a large oak, and began incubation on March 1. Fortunately, these adult birds are fairly tolerant of people, as long as they are not loud or shooting. Excessive noise has caused them to drop food and take off, leaving the young without their meal. Another thing about these birds is that they can recognize a few of us who have made many trips into the canyon to observe them. Dave, for example, usually wears olive drab clothing, but one day he was hunting deer, and when the male eagle saw him in his blaze orange coveralls, he raised such a ruckus that Dave was embarrassed and left.

As incubation was proceeding in 1992, an observation point was established slightly above and 210 yards from the nest. By this time Dave had replaced his 1,000 mm lens with a 800 mm Canon lens about 16 inches long, and he also had two doublers. When he took the new unit up to the observation area and set up his camera with that big white lens on it, the male eagle took one look at the thing and flew across the creek and scolded him. As soon as he got home, Dave got out the olive drab paint and sprayed that big white lens.

In 1992, the female began incubating eggs on March 1 and two eaglets hatched on April 6. Again after making a disaster out of the nest, one bird fledged on June 24 and the other on July 2.

In 1993 the nest was rebuilt and incubation started March 2. On March 13, however, a blizzard hit. Maybe the birds were forced off the nest or maybe they couldn't turn the eggs. For whatever reason, after incubating the eggs for 60 more days, the adults finally abandoned the nest.

By this time it was obvious this pair of eagles does not migrate; the adults stay in or around the canyon all year long.

In 1994 incubation started on March 1, and on April 26 one eaglet hatched and it fledged on July 7.

1995 was, as Cecil puts it, "a banner year." Incubation started February 20 and by April 1 three eaglets were in the nest. One of Dave's better pictures (if not the best) shows the female eagle with an oak leaf in its beak, teaching the three young about housekeeping. In the photo, the backs of the youngsters are visible, and you can see the differences in their plumage as they were just starting to get their flight feathers. They were hatched over a period of two weeks. As the youngsters grew and got their flight feathers, observations were made from the opposite shore, across the creek from the nest. This did not interfere with the eagle's activities. The big lens made observations easy at that distance. Dave enjoyed giving the many visitors to the observation site a chance to watch the eagles through the big lens, all while explaining to them what we've learned.

Paul and Jean were a couple from State College that came to the nest area nearly every Saturday. On June 17, Jean was looking through the lens at the female when she said to Dave, "I can read the numbers on her band. "Dave grabbed his pen, and as Jean read the numbers, he wrote on the palm of his hand "0629-16126." He then checked the numbers himself. What a break, after all this time, they finally had the key to determining the origin of this female.

Cecil called the number into the Bird Banding Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland, and learned that it was a female that had been banded at Shohola on August 26, 1984, making it a Pennsylvania hacked bird. The male's band number, with the exception of the last digit, was picked up a short time later. He is from the same group as the female, but until we get that last digit, we won't know if it came from Shohola or Haldeman. (The only other number picked up was 129, and that was on August 24, 1985, at a location somewhere north of Greensburg. That bird being released at Shohola, possibly flew over or spent some time near the Pine Creek Canyon on its way westward. It was banded May 5, 1984.)

The three eaglets that hatched in '95 did surprisingly well, especially considering that they were hatched about a week or two apart. On the evening of June 9, hikers came upon an immature eagle. It most likely was the oldest of the three young on its first flight. The next morning the hikers found it still along the trail, but off to the side. It appeared to be fine, but it didn't attempt to fly. Nobody knows if it survived or not. The second eaglet left the nest on June 12 and was seen following one of the adults up and down Pine Creek. The last one fledged on the June 20, leaving the nest in shambles again.

In 1996 incubation started February 27, and by April 5 two eaglets had hatched. These two fledged on the 22 and 27 of June, but not until they destroyed the nest. In 1997, incubation started February 25, and two chicks hatched on March 30, fledging took place on the 20th and 24th of June, again leaving the nest for the parents to rebuild.

Incubation in 1998 began February 21, with two hatching by March 31 and the one fledging on June 17.

In August of that year, a call came in about an eagle on the ground in Pine Creek Canyon. I met WCO John Snyder, who had gone into the canyon and picked up

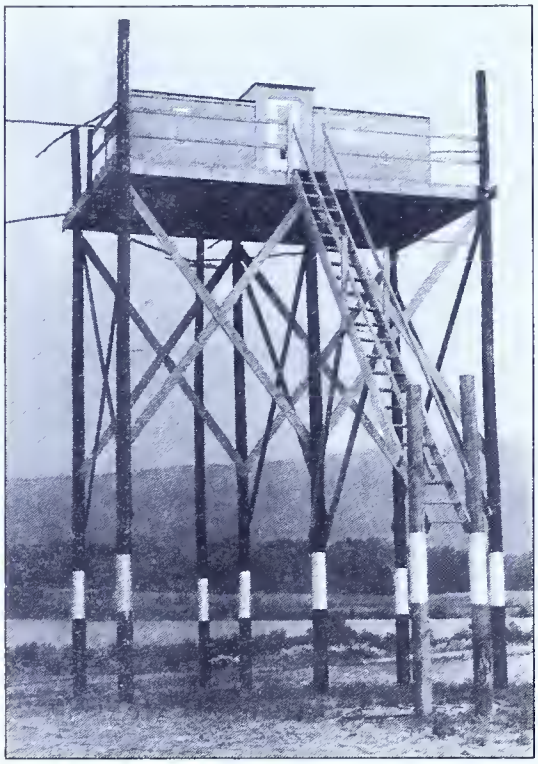


AFTER MUCH perseverance, Dave Webster captured this photograph of "Mom" in 1995 with her three eaglets. Note the difference in plumage development of the three young birds.

the immature bird. John had a smirk on his face when I pulled in alongside of his vehicle and he opened the tailgate for me; there stood the eagle. I thought it was nice of John to allow me to crawl in there and get it, especially after I learned he lost it once while bringing it up out of the canyon.

The bird had a droopy wing, so on the way home I stopped at the Loyalsock Animal Hospital for a veterinarian to examine it. (These folks have been treating wildlife for my wife, tink, and me as long as we have been rehabilitating.) We thought at first it had a hairline fracture and treated it as such, hoping it would heal and we could release it.

Despite living so close to this area, I had never been near the eagle nest. So, with the nest site three miles up the canyon from the parking lot, Tink and I bought bicycles and made trips every weekend right into December, to find a good release site. The experience was most enjoyable. We not



FROM 1983-89, young eaglets taken from their nests in Saskatchewan were raised on hacking towers at Haldeman Island, here, in the Susquehanna River, and at Shohola Falls in Pike County.

only saw the nest, the pair of adults and the other immature eagle (two eaglets hatched in 1998) but great blue herons, common mergansers, and migrating songbirds, along with the beautiful foliage.

One Saturday morning in November, Tink and I were on the trail south of Pine Island and had stopped because the immature eagle had just flown upstream and landed on a dead limb about 10 feet above the water at a bend in the creek. It seemed to be looking at something around the corner where we could not see. It turns out the young eagle was watching a beautiful 10-point buck that had waded out into the stream. Steam rose from his body as he waded in far enough so only his head was above water.

After a period of time at our rehab center, the young eagle's condition got no better. X-rays showed the left humerus had been broken when it was a nestling and healed in such a way that it was unable to fly. It is now in a sanctuary with other eagles.

Migrating eagles were plentiful during the fall of 1998. On one of our trips, and not counting the resident pair, we saw four different birds. It was during this time that I met Dave and Cecil and found out Lloyd Forcey was as interested in those eagles as we were, and had been observing them for a lot longer than I have.

In 1999, after much repair work to the nest, the female began incubation on February 24. The weather remained mild until a substantial snowstorm during mid-March. Having been through this before, the female knew enough to keep the snow from the eggs. Three eaglets hatched from April 3 to 10. Cecil, Dave, Lloyd and I monitored the nest after the eaglets hatched, because we didn't want anything other than natural occurrences to happen to them.

On April 14 I went to check the nest myself. The female was at the nest, tending the three youngsters, and while I was wondering where the male was, I heard a low *kack-kack-kack*. Looking up, I spotted the male with a 16-inch sucker. The eagle made a loop and landed on the nest. It was a most memorable experience.

So far, this pair of eagles has produced 19 young. Two have died and one is in a sanctuary. An eagle takes about four years to mature. The female was banded in 1983, and is the one that had the wing marker, making her four years old when she nested and raised one eaglet in 1987. The male is about the same age.

This pair of bald eagles is remarkable in their adaptation to Pennsylvania and particularly the Pine Creek Canyon. I hope their offspring have the same traits. Our canyon eagles have definitely adapted to people. With more disturbances every year, I hope people learn to adapt to the eagles. □

Roadsides For Wildlife

By Kevin Mixon
Wildlife Biologist

THE Game Commission, in cooperation with PennDOT and the Turnpike Commission, is developing a pilot program to enhance wildlife habitat along selected major rural roads. Techniques being implemented are: Reduce mowing frequency, delay mowing until after July 15, increase mowing height, plant a warm season grass and forb mixture in key areas, and inform and educate the public on roadsides as wildlife habitat.

For safety reasons, a clear zone of at least 30 feet from the edge of pavement will be continually maintained in a short grass condition. By changing some of the current mowing practices outside of that zone, the herbaceous plants will increase in height, density and diversity. This will, in turn, provide food and cover for birds, small mammals and insects.

Species likely to use these herbaceous habitats will be those that are found in edge habitats or require several different habitat types to exist. Typical bird and mammal species likely to benefit from the implementation of the five goals would be goldfinch, bluebird, kestrel, meadow vole, cottontail rabbit, pheasant and red fox. A fox may hunt for mice and voles, a bluebird might feed on insects, and a hen pheasant may nest in roadside habitat allowed to grow.

Reduced Mowing

By limiting how often designated areas are mowed, vegetation will grow high enough to provide wildlife habitat. Mowing once every two or three years, when the vegetation is at least nine to 12 inches high, will prevent woody growth from taking over an area. Woody growth is not recommended in rights-of-way because it creates a potential safety problem by reducing visibility of deer or other wildlife that may be crossing the road.

Delayed Mowing

Mowing after July 15 gives most nesting birds and small mammals time to successfully raise their young. Countless nests and young are destroyed



REDUCED MOWING along roadsides allows existing vegetation to develop into wildlife habitat.



ROADSIDE HABITAT should consist of a diversity of grasses and forbs that benefit wildlife species.

when mowing occurs earlier. Most equipment operators are unaware of the high number of nests that are destroyed by mowing in late spring and early summer. The Turnpike Commission is considering implementation of delayed mowing in designated areas in the future.

Increased Mowing Height

Most grassland birds nest early in the spring and use the previous years' dead plants as nesting sites. Mowing at a minimum height of nine to 12 inches can provide nesting cover for these birds. Additionally, a higher diversity of plant species will be able to survive a higher mowing height. When plant diversity is increased, insect, bird and small mammal diversity increases in turn.

Planting Warm Season Grasses and Forbs

In certain areas it may be appropriate to plant warm season grasses and forbs to enhance the habitat quality.

Warm season grasses are aesthetically pleasing, grow during the warm summer months, and provide high wildlife values. Forbs (broad-leaved herbaceous plants) provide plant diversity and seeds that many birds and small mammals eat and store as a winter food source.

During the first year of growth, warm season grasses expend most of their energy developing a deep (6 feet or more) root system. As a result, above ground growth can be sparse. Increased height and density shouldn't be expected until the second growing season. Again, plantings will be located 30 or more feet from roads, so they do not inhibit a motorist's visibility.

Warm season grasses have resilient yet sturdy stems that can help reduce wind blown snow by catching and storing it until it melts at a later date. Soil conservation may result by reducing soil erosion. Shading of roadsides by trees would be reduced if the area adjacent to the roads is maintained in herbaceous vegetation only, thus providing for safer roads.

Deer Use of Roadsides

Deer pose a serious safety concern when they are close to roadways. They actually may be attracted to roadsides by the cool season grasses that are maintained in a lush condition by repeated



WARM SEASON GRASSES will be planted this spring at a demonstration site at the Sideling Hill Service Plaza on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.



ART GOVER from the Penn State Agricultural Extension Unit examines a field of big bluestem grass. Big bluestem is a highly desirable warm season grass that offers nesting and escape cover for a wide variety of wildlife.

mowing throughout the growing season. By incorporating delayed mowing programs schedules, the vegetation will be maintained in a more mature state that is less attractive to deer. Improved roadway safety will result by a decrease in deer activity along roads.

Warm season grasses may not draw deer to the roadside as much as cool season grasses, because the growth of warm season grasses occurs during the summer months, when an ample supply of more nutritious food sources are available in areas away from roadsides.

Information and Education

The Sideling Hill service plaza along the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Fulton County and part of the interchange area for I-99 and Route 22 at Hollidaysburg in Blair County have already been planted with warm season grasses (switchgrass, big bluestem, and Indiangrass) and forbs. These demonstration areas will be used to help explain the values of warm season grasses as a component of roadside habitat. Be sure to check them out when you're driving by.

Roadside habitat has already been improved at some locations due to implementation of the Roadsides for Wildlife goals. The Game Commission looks forward to expanding the program as it gains support as a viable method to improve wildlife habitat in Pennsylvania.

Partnerships

The Roadsides for Wildlife program was developed through the collaborative efforts of the following organizations: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Federal Highway Administration, Pheasants Forever, and the Penn State Agricultural Extension Unit.

Properly managed roadsides can provide important food, cover and nesting areas for birds, small mammals and insects. Wildlife habitat can be enhanced along roadsides by reduced mowing, delayed mowing, planting warm season grasses, and mowing at a higher height. Thousands of roadside acres in Pennsylvania can be incorporated into the Roadsides for Wildlife program. □

All the Right Moves

By Bob D'Angelo

Game News Associate Editor

IT WAS already light as we pulled off the road and parked the truck. It was the 1997 spring gobbler season opener, and my hunting partner, John Gaskins, had permission for us to hunt a section of woods and fields in Schuylkill County. We had hunted this spot the previous season and had worked several toms, but we failed to bag any. I had gained some valuable information that year, though: I learned the lay of the land and where the turkeys roosted.

This year we were late getting to our spot, because of traffic, and by the time we should have already been set-up at our spots, we were still getting our equipment together and heading across the grass field to the woods where we planned to hunt. John set up on a bench just below the edge of the field. I continued along the edge of the woods, crossed another small field and went down over the side of the ridge to an area where the turkeys often roosted.

As soon as I got to where I wanted to set up, I flushed a roosted gobbler. Watching him crash out of the top of a tall oak and sail down the ridge, I couldn't miss the long beard swaying back and forth. Chastising myself for not being set up before daylight, and knowing that I had botched my chance for that particular gobbler, I thought about what to do next.

I didn't have to ponder long, though, as a resounding gobble echoed up the ridge from a hollow on the other side of a steep ravine from where I was standing. The bird sounded as if it was already on the ground, and I couldn't detect any hens nearby. It seemed to be an ideal situation. The only problem was that the gobbler was on the other side of the ravine. Knowing that a gobbler seldom crosses such an obstacle when searching for a hen, I put my orange cap on, moved down the ridge, crossed the ravine and worked to within 100 yards of where I figured I last heard the tom.

I wrapped my orange safety band around a large tree and settled in at the base. The soft yelps from my diaphragm call were immediately answered with a loud double gobble. He was close, and I scanned the pine thicket in my front for any sign of movement.

A black shape appeared uphill on an old logging road at the edge of the pines, about 70 yards away. The gobbler fanned its tail and went into a strut, pirouetting one way, then changing directions, in attempts at luring the "hen" it had heard.

I softly clucked on the mouth call, but the tom wouldn't budge. After a few minutes the gobbler drew in its feathers and moved off. The last time I heard him, he seemed to be more than 300 yards away and still moving off. Realizing I had located the bird's strutting zone, I grabbed my orange band, put my orange cap back on, gathered up my gear and moved to within 40 yards of where the bird had been.

Setting up again, I pulled out a box call and sent out a series of coarse yelps. The



gobbler liked that. The tom double gobbled and rapidly cut the distance in half. I pulled down my facemask, and when he gobbled again, he was close, real close. He reappeared on the bench where he had strutted earlier, but this time was about 40 yards away. I clucked twice on the diaphragm call, and the gobbler closed in a few more yards, stretched out his bright, red neck, turned his blue and white head and stared right through me. I spotted the beard, centered the bead of the Winchester 1300 12-gauge turkey gun on the tom's red waddles at the base of his neck and squeezed the trigger. The Winchester 3-inch magnum number 5s knocked the bird right off his feet. An hour and a half after it began, the duel was over. The 14-pound jake had a thick, 5-inch beard.

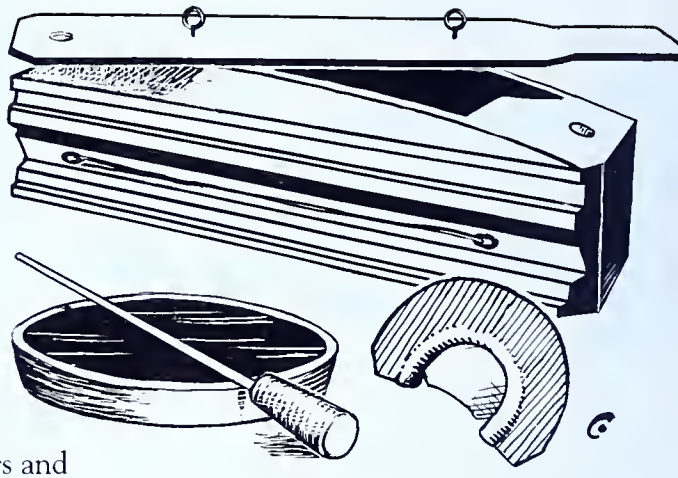
Just as I was finished filling out my tag John showed up. He said he could see the bird strutting but couldn't lure it off the bench.

While walking across the field back to the truck, I thought about how the morning's hunt had unfolded. Although I had taken several gobblers in previous seasons, it struck me that on this hunt I had used several tactics learned from failed hunts in prior years. I had drawn on past experiences and made all the right moves, and it made the difference in bagging the jake. Well, nearly all the right moves. The only mistake I made on that hunt — and it cost me a chance at a longbeard — was arriving late at my hunting spot. Here's what I did right.

When hunting spring gobblers, it's imperative to thoroughly learn the terrain where you're hunting. When I first heard the gobbler he was on a flat and wouldn't travel across the steep ravine to where I was. I could have called all morning, and although the tom would have answered, the chances of him crossing that ravine were slim at best. Experience had told me to abandon my original stand and move closer to the bird. When I realized that the gobbler was moving back and forth along the bench, I recognized the location as an established strutting zone.

To routinely kill gobblers, find their strutting zones. Strutting zones are

places where gobblers like to display for hens. Likely spots are narrow benches, logging roads and field edges. Many times a gobbler will use the same zone year after year, and if he's killed, another tom will often take over the vacant zone. To locate a strutting zone, look for wing drag marks on bare patches of earth, discarded wing feathers and gobbler droppings.



I didn't know the exact strutting zone of the gobbler I killed in '97, but I knew that turkeys roosted in the immediate area. It was only after calling to the bird and having him approach to a certain spot, then move off and come back, that I realized I had found a strutting zone. Then it was simply a matter of letting him move off, so I could quietly relocate within range of the strutting zone, then call, allowing him to think a hen had moved into his zone. It worked to perfection on my hunt.

Another right move on my Schuylkill County gobbler hunt was not relying on only one type of call. The gobbler responded to my diaphragm call but really got excited after I broke out the box call.

A diaphragm call is best during rainy weather and when a gobbler is in close, but I think gobblers in recent years have become more leery of mouth calls, maybe because most hunters use them and the birds have become accustomed to them. The bottom line is to carry an assortment of calls, because you never know what will work on a particular tom or on a particular day. I'm never without a box, slate and diaphragm calls.

Whichever you choose, learn how to use it, then learn when and when not to use it. Most hunters call entirely too much. I call sparingly, sometimes only a cluck or two every 20 minutes or so once I have a gobbler located. With a heavily hunted gobbler, one series of yelps or clucks per hour may be more prudent.

That old adage that wisdom comes with age is true in hunting. The savvy turkey hunter learns from past mistakes and hunts smarter not necessarily harder. Then, all the right moves fall into place. □

Cover Painting by Jim Trusilo

AFTER WINTERING in the southern states, woodcock — also called the timberdoodle, wood snipe and bog bird — migrate back to Pennsylvania and other points farther north to nest. Upon his return, the male woodcock establishes his courting territory, and then his well-known courting ritual begins. If you've never seen it, the American woodcock's flight is a sight to behold. The bird makes a buzz-like call accompanied by mechanical looking movements while on the ground, usually in a small clearing, then ascends into his flight display, circling upward with a whistling of wings. All of a sudden the woodcock drops into his descent, twittering all the way down. Woodcock populations have been declining, mostly because of habitat loss.

Come to Outdoor Heritage 2000 this May for an exciting look back at Pennsylvania's rich history . . .

The Nature of Heritage

By Paula Zitzler

IN PENNSYLVANIA our heritage is the outdoors. The clues are everywhere. We follow the old tram road up the hollow where we know that big buck is waiting. We creep along the stream to that great fishing hole by the old milldam. We scramble under a rock overhang to wait out a shower and imagine the ancient hunter with the flint-tipped spear who did the same centuries before. We pedal along quiet trails that were once the route of chugging locomotives hauling timber, coal or stone. Our highways cross the valleys and ridges on routes established by moccasin-wearing feet. The nature of our heritage here in Penn's Woods is a heritage of nature.

Our outdoor heritage is preserved in stories passed down through generations like cherished heirlooms. Some stories are written down and become part of our history. These stories of real people capture our imaginations. They suspend time and make us think about the landscape we live on in new ways.

William Penn's first colonists were farmers, shopkeepers and tradesmen. They were transplanted to a forest filled with unfamiliar plants and animals. Penn's Woods also was home to thousands of people who identified themselves as the Delaware, Shawnee, Seneca and other equally exotic-sounding names. The new colonists learned much about their new environment from these native peoples, but considered the new land a thing to be conquered. They waged war with ax, plow and flintlock.

The Big Hunt

In 1760, along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, an army of 200 hunters engaged in the "Big Hunt." The Big Hunt was essentially a circle drive; the goal was the extermination of every wild animal that threatened crops or livestock. The circle of hunters started about a half-mile apart and proceeded to the center. As they walked, the hunters created a racket using horns, bells, drums, hoots and hollers that got the attention of every living thing within earshot. The hunters bagged 98 deer, 111 bison, 2 elk, 109 wolves, 41 mountain lions and 114 bobcats.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Big Hunt had evolved into the "Grand Hunt." The object was no longer the destruction of animals caught in the drive. In fact, both guns and alcohol were banned from the hunt. Instead, teams of hunters, with their own mascots and colors, took to the fields and woods and attempted to count every animal they saw. The last

As part of OH2, bluebird box kits will be distributed during "Kid's Day," which will be Friday, May 5. Lowe's donated 5,000 pine boards to the Game Commission, and the kits will be cut and prepared at the agency's Howard Nursery in Centre County.

Grand Hunt in Beaver County was held on October 30, 1866 and matched the "Dan Boones" against the "Davy Crocketts." The Dan Boones counted 2,985 animals, but was bested by the Crocketts, who counted 3,715. History does not record the types of animals inventoried, but the banquet that followed the hunt was an elaborate affair with speeches, toasts and songs. The officers of each team enforced a code of rules designed to enhance the hilarity of the festive evening. Profanity was tolerated only from the captain of the losing team, married men were not permitted to receive messages from their wives, and anyone who brought up politics was "laid out" under the table.

The Longest Night

By the 1790s, hundreds of people had moved into the wilderness of central and western Pennsylvania. While many of these settlers were farmers, some had noticed that the mountains and ridges that bordered the farmlands contained important mineral resources, including vast deposits of iron ore and coal. Towns and villages grew up around the iron furnaces and mines, and along the roads connecting them. Despite these inroads of civilization, the region was still a wilderness. Common sense dictated that reasonable people carry a rifle or musket for protection from panthers and wolves, or to drop a deer or turkey for supper. James McElroy always carried his rifle.

James arrived in Dublin Township, Huntingdon County, in the late 1700s. One day while on his way to Huntingdon for supplies he happened upon a deer. He aimed carefully, shot, and dropped the deer. He reloaded, and as he approached the animal, a panther jumped into the path before him and started for the deer. James stopped, and as he drew a bead on the big cat, was startled by the sound of a pack of wolves. It seems the wolves had picked up his trail and were closing fast. A ferocious panther before him, hungry wolves behind him, and a rifle that had to be reloaded after each shot. As if his situation wasn't difficult enough, it was nearly night.

Thinking quickly, James aimed carefully and dispatched the panther. Just as the wolves approached, James scrambled up a tree. He spent the night perched in his makeshift refuge, just out of the reach of the hungry wolves. By the light of the moon he reloaded. Whenever he could get a clear shot, he fired at the wolves. His aim was true.

As daylight crept into the valley, James listened: All was quiet. In the dim light, he looked for movement but saw nothing. He reloaded and slowly climbed down from the tree. There, around the tree, were 22 dead wolves. Up the path a bit, the panther was sprawled near the deer. As was the custom, he scalped the wolves and the panther and took the scalps to Huntingdon. For his long night's work, James earned a $12 bounty for each scalp and the reputation as a mighty hunter.

Thirty Years a Hunter

Philip Tome was one of the most prolific hunters in Penn's Woods. His exploits are legendary. He was born in 1782 in Dauphin County, but grew up along Pine Creek and the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. Tome collected hunting and fishing stories from his life on the frontier, and from his 15 years as interpreter for Cornplanter, the Seneca chief, in a memoir, *Pioneer Life, or, Thirty Years a Hunter*, published in 1854.

Throughout his career, Tome was fasci-

nated by the wildlife he encountered, particularly the elk. In 1800 he accompanied his father on a mission to capture an elk, live. His father, Jacob, had accepted a wager made by the patrons at Irving Stephenson's tavern, near the mouth of Pine Creek. Jacob Tome bet that he could capture an elk and bring it to the tavern. The bet was 250 pounds.

Jacob, along with a neighbor named Maddock and his two sons, set out on January 1, 1800. They soon picked up the trail of an elk and sent out their dogs. After five days, the dogs cornered a bull elk "against the root of an upturned tree." Efforts to throw a rope over the antlers of the animal failed, and the elk escaped. It was cornered again at nightfall, but in the morning managed to elude the hunters once again. Eventually, the elk was chased back to the rock, and using a 20-foot pole, Jacob lowered a noose over the elk's antlers. After much exertion on the part of both men and animal, a second rope was lowered onto the elk. Both ropes were fastened to stout trees.

That evening, they tied the ropes in such a way that there was no play, and the elk was immobilized. They provided some browse within the animal's reach; two men were sent for a horse, and the next day, the elk was brought home without incident.

Like the hunters of long ago, we all have tales of our adventures in Penn's Woods. Each story seems to have a life of its own. They lurk in the backs of our minds, ready to spring into any conversation that permits. There's the one about the one that got away and the one that didn't, the biggest ever and the smallest yet. But that's another story.

Need more stories?

Outdoor Heritage 2000 has 'em! Outdoor Heritage 2000 will be held on Friday and Saturday, May 5 and 6, 2000, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds. Admission and parking are free and everyone is welcome.

OH2 Photo Contest

In conjunction with Outdoor Heritage 2000, the Game Commission and *Westsylvania* magazine are sponsoring a photo contest. Contest categories are: "Watchable Wildlife," the animals must be alive and in their natural habitat; "Pennsylvania Outdoor Heritage," subjects must be historic and outside; "People Enjoying the Outdoors," they can be in a park, on the water, even in a tree, just so they're doing something naturally; and "Magic of the Mountains," an open category to recognize photographic talent and artistic flair.

Winners in each category will receive prizes valued at more than $300, with a grand prize package valued at more than $2,000.

For more information write Outdoor Heritage 2000 Photo Contest, P.O. Box 565, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648, or call 814-696-9380. Entries must be postmarked by December 1, 2000.

Outdoor Heritage 2000 is a celebration of the people and landscape of central and southwestern Pennsylvania. About 100 exhibitors will demonstrate hunting and fishing equipment, present craft workshops, and show slides and videos on a variety of nature and historical topics. Re-enactors from some of Pennsylvania's wars, including the Civil War, will man a living history camp.

Huntingdon is about 40 miles south of State College. The fairgrounds are located south of town; follow the signs from U.S. Route 22, or Route 26.

Outdoor Heritage 2000 is co-sponsored by the Game Commission and the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation, a not-for-profit organization that finds ways to make heritage part of our everyday lives. For more information, call 1-800-898-3636. □

True Sportsmen Still Around

By William G. Keppley

Near the end of July 1998 I had heart valve replacement surgery, and as you might imagine, it restricted my endurance for some time. As bear season drew near, I couldn't decide if I wanted to hunt for bear or just wait for deer season. I ended up buying a bear license, figuring I'd go mainly to scout for deer season.

I arrived at Home Camp, in Tioga County, on Sunday. My hunting partner, Terry Meredith, who had arrived about an hour before me, told me he had seen a bear near Darling Run the weekend before. Figuring that would be as good a place as any to start, we decided I would hunt the bottom of Darling Run and Terry would work his way to the top. We set the alarm for 4:15.

Monday morning we ate a hearty breakfast then headed for the Darling Run parking lot along a new Rails to Trails project. We split up onto different trails. I walked in the nearly dried up creek bed to a location Terry had described to me the night before. Over the course of the day, I moved three times, looking for that perfect spot to watch for a bear. Finally, around 3:30, I found a good spot to sit at on Tuesday. This location offered good visibility behind me and an open view across the creek bed.

On Tuesday we each drove to our hunting locations. Before we split up, we decided I would hunt until noon and Terry would hunt until 4:30. I arrived at my spot about 6:30, and at 7:45 I heard leaves rustling near the top of the mountain. Then I saw a bear bolt into the clearing where some trees had blown down. It turned immediately to its left and disappeared into some pines. To my surprise, the bear turned and came down the hill directly toward me. I remember flipping my scope to the side and using the open sights. When the bear was about 30 yards away I fired my first shot. I found out later it was a good hit in the middle of the chest. The bear turned, and I fired three more shots that never





found their mark. The bear then dropped about 75 yards away and lay still.

I filled out my tag and attached it to the bear then did the field-dressing chores. I tried to drag it with my rope, but I couldn't budge it. After about a half-hour of pulling, my surgery incision started to bother me. I sat down and tried to think of who I could get to help. I knew Terry would not return to his truck until 4 p.m. at the earliest.

I left the bear and walked to my truck. I left a note for Terry telling him to come back to my spot. I sat in my truck for awhile then went back to sit next to the bear. At noon I started to walk out to the truck again when I ran into another hunter.

After I told him my story, the man, who I later found out lived in Asaph, told me he had five friends waiting on Route 362, and that he would go get them to drag out the bear. Ten minutes later he was back with the five hunters. After reaching the bear, each hunter congratulated me, and then they began to pull on the drag rope only to have it break.

The first hunter I met had a piece of chain, and after wrapping the chain around the bear's neck, four other hunters fastened ropes to each leg. They actually carried the bear out of the mountains and put it in my truck. I offered to pay the men for all their help, but they refused it, saying "We're all hunters and must work together."

I took the bear to the check station north of Gaines and was told by wildlife conservation officers that it was a female and that it weighed 222 pounds. Its estimated live weight was 262 pounds.

I'm indebted to the true sportsmen who were willing to sacrifice their time and effort to help a fellow hunter. Thanks, guys. □

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

THOUGHT AND MEMORY

Bob Sopchick

OVER THE YEARS I've received a number of generous invitations from readers to hunt with them in their special corner of Penn's Woods, but I've always declined, as my time is very limited and, at any rate, I'm kind of a pain to hunt with. I'm easily distracted, stopping often to sketch or photograph something that catches my eye, or to daydream. Like a deer, I browse the woods, searching for food for thought. Because of this, I usually hunt alone.

A few letters touched a chord, though. Two were from older hunters who wrote that they were no longer able to hunt, but wished that we could have hunted together even once. They said that the words and pictures in this column stirred memories of their own days afield. Another letter was from a youngster who related that what he found here helped him to look beyond the obvious, to hunt with his heart as well as his head, and for that reason, hunting was more interesting for him now. For them, and especially for my father, who now at age 70 continues to hunt several days a week, but wishes we could traverse the hills like we used to, I extend this personal invitation to come along with me on a spring turkey hunt. I'll be the guide, you can do the shooting. I've got several gobblers located, and we'll have to start early. I'll pick you up at three.

Hey, old friend, it's good to see you again. Here, let me help you get your gear in the truck. It's drizzling, and that will make for quiet walking, but they're not calling for any rain. Hope you got a good night's sleep because we have a lot of hiking to do, but I know you're up for it. Just before we get into the mountains we'll stop for some breakfast at Annie's Diner.

Coffee smells good, doesn't it? I'm going to have an egg sandwich and a piece of pie. They make great omelets here if you like those. I stop here for her homemade pies, though. Annie makes one called "Deep Forest," with apples, cherries and several different wild berries, and a perfect flaky crust.

Years ago you didn't meet too many other turkey hunters at these diners, but now there's not only more hunters, but they're easier to recognize, wearing their favorite camo. I recall hand painting my own camo outfit on gray work coveralls way back in 1970. I actually took it up in the woods and copied tree bark and branches and leaves on it, with lots of detail. It took a long time. That was many years before the first realistic patterns appeared on the market. I painted the legs different than the top, the way a woods is graded, and it really blended in, even when standing up. I



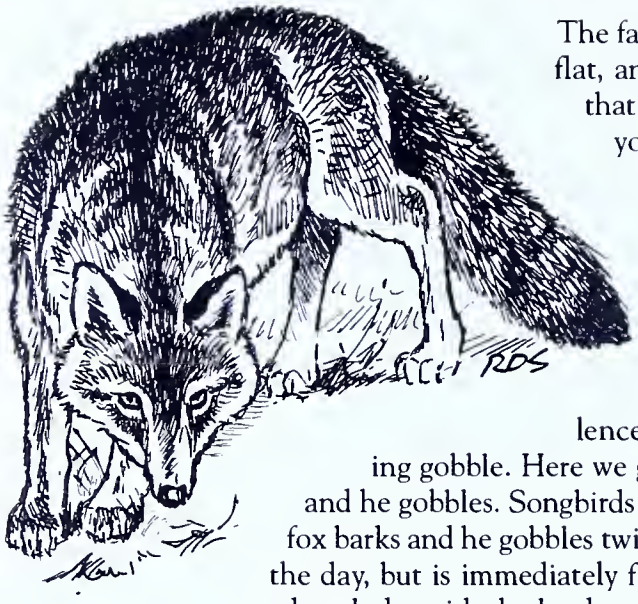
wish I would have kept that outfit, but somehow it kept shrinking. Too much pie maybe. That is good pie, isn't it? We'll work that off this morning. Breakfast is on me, I'm just glad you could come along.

This is my favorite turkey woods, and it looks like we have the place to ourselves. We want to ease onto the big flat just below the highest hump on this ridge while it's still dark. We have plenty of time to get there. The first part of this hike is tough, but there's a switchback trail that makes the climb easier. Once on top, we'll take the ridge straight back and up, a nice gradual ascent, and we'll be in position to listen for that gobbler before he opens an eye.

That wasn't too bad, was it? Let's rest here a bit. Listen there . . . far off . . . coyotes. One of my favorite animals and a fellow hunter. In all these years I've seen only five of them. No, I don't begrudge them any deer. There's getting to be too many deer up here again anyway. Some forests I've seen are lifeless, very unhealthy. This woods isn't real bad yet, sort of like a refrigerator two hours after some hungry teenagers learned that you just filled it up. Just figure, each deer has to eat about six pounds of food each day. Fact is, and this has been tested, it takes a person with pruning shears a whole working day to cut and fill a sack with six pounds of bite-sized browse. Imagine a work force of a million people doing this to our forests every day of the year, and you can get a better idea of what this deer herd can do. And what they're munching isn't always browse, but often crops or ornamental shrubs. We better head up now, from here to the flat it's a fairly easy walk, just a bit more than a mile.

Here we are, right on time, and it's still dark.



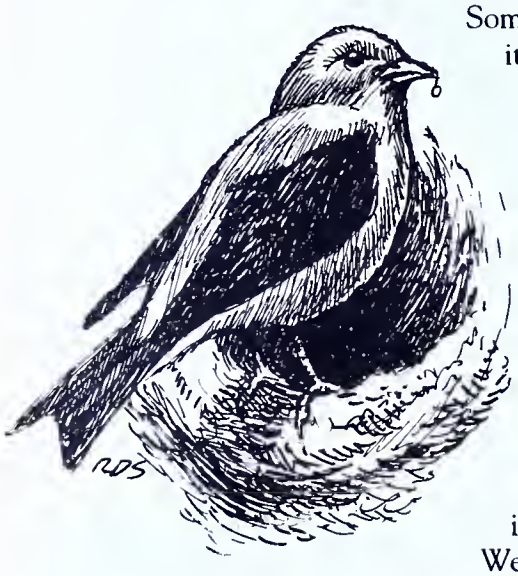


The faintest wash of light creeps across the flat, and the woods scarcely breathes. It is that surreal time of day when you can feel your own being drawing in, then stirring to the light. From up here you can feel those nocturnal forces shift and turn while countless other forms rise like a gentle wave to the new day.

There . . . a soft tree call . . . and another, and the silence of the flat is fractured by a deafening gobble. Here we go. The first complaint from a crow, and he gobbles. Songbirds wake and warble, and he gobbles. A fox barks and he gobbles twice. He's not like us, waking slowly to the day, but is immediately filled with the rapture of the season, and explodes with the loud proclamation of his chemical purpose. I cluck to him and he shouts back. He flies down, just over the lip of the ridge to our left, and gobbles again.

Two hens walk by, straight to His Majesty. Another hen lights on the flat and follows the others. He answers my clucks and gentle yelps, but I think we may have a long wait before us. The birds move off up the hollow through a large patch of mayapples that border a mist-shrouded run. I remind him that we will be here waiting. I'm confident he'll be back when these hens move off. In the meantime, let me show you this woods.

Look there, a scarlet tanager. It pauses to splash and drink in the hollow bowl where a limb broke from a tree. Isn't it surprising how a little spot of brilliant color can fill up a landscape? The greening woods is alive with the red-orange sparks of tanagers and cardinals, spotted newts, red trilliums, pileated woodpeckers, and the red we would most like to see up close, the crimson adornments of the gobbler himself.



The ruffed grouse are really drumming today. I love that sound. Sometimes I like to sit against a tree, close my eyes and take it all in. Listening to this mountain is not unlike a tape I heard of amplified sounds from within a human body. Streams gurgle and splash over logs and rocks, coursing like blood through valves and arteries. The creaking trees and rattling branches are the sounds of moving joints, of bones and tendons. Wind rushing through the vales and hollows of this porous mountain is the same as air inhaled through nostrils and exhaled by lungs, and the wild hammering of a heart could be the drumming of the grouse itself. The gobble of the turkey is the urgent voice of spring, and all of this, layer upon layer of life, sound upon sound, internal and external and eternal, is expressed in that wild proclamation.

Well, the weatherman was wrong, the air is warm and sweet and it's starting to rain. I have a spare rain poncho for you, but let's ease down over the edge here, there's a big rock overhang where we can keep dry if it doesn't blow in.

You know, that's the first thunder I've heard this year. And listen to a gobbler answer back on the other side of the hollow. There's another, farther down. It sure is raining hard, but at least we're dry. Let's have some coffee while we wait; got a thermos here in my pack, fixed just the way you like it.

Two ravens fly up the hollow, stunningly beautiful against the misty, yellow green backdrop. Thought and Memory, those were the names of the ravens that belonged to Odin, the god of Norse mythology. Each day they flew around the world and returned at evening, bringing to him news of all that was happening. *Quork, quork, quork* echo the voices of the ravens as they pass. Ravens are brainy birds and always speak their minds. It's said that ravens produce a variety of sounds second only to man, between 18 and 64, and our ravens probably speak in a different dialect than ravens from Minnesota or Alaska. They speak with inflections and emotions, like we do. Even though we don't know what they are saying, we do know how birds feel. After a period of bad weather, during a winter thaw, listen to a cardinal and you know how it feels as it sings in the warm rays. Listen to the strident caws of crows harassing a hawk in a tree, and you know the hawk is perched. Listen to the crows scream, and you know the hawk has taken wing. Listen to the ravens speak as they pass, and somehow you get a feeling they could be talking about you. Or to you. Speaking of memory, our gobbler up on top has opened up again and he sounds lonely. The shower is over, so let's hustle back to where we last talked to him.

My soft yelps and quiet clucks are followed by a steady tirade of gobbles as he beelines in. Get ready. There he is, standing on tiptoes looking for us, surveying the flat. Don't move. He's strutting again. Listen to those gobbles! Steady. Let me get him in a little closer. Okay, wait till he puts his head up.

What a bird! Way to go. What do you think, about 20 pounds? And look at that beard, 10 inches at least. A mature boss gobbler with long sharp spurs! Yeah, I'm still shaking too. You carry the bird and I'll carry your gun. On the way down I want to stop and get a mess of those big morels along the trail. I don't know about you, but I'm hungry. I've got venison backstrap marinating back home from a rut buck I arrowed last fall. We'll have morels and venison for lunch — autumn and spring in one meal — the best of both worlds. And you know, if we stop at Annie's on the way back we can pick up one of her berry pies — it'd be nice to throw a bit of summer in there, too.



Spring flies by all too quickly, and in the end, all we have are thoughts and memories. Thanks for sharing these with me. If the image of that bird fades a bit as the years go by, I did this drawing of him for you. Best of luck, my good friend.

Women Step Back in History

By Connie Mertz

AS A HUNTER, the outdoors is my companion. I have tasted a smorgasbord of wild foods and wild game. I have admired nature's pristine beauty, from a stand of hemlocks atop a ridge to her bubbly brooks in the nooks and crannies of Penn's Woods.

I enjoy new challenges, so when I was invited to attend the Blue Ridge Rifles Muzzleloader Club's first women's primitive rendezvous, held last spring at the club's range along the north slope of the Blue Mountains, I enthusiastically accepted. After all, I had yet to fire a muzzleloader. I had never experienced primitive camping, nor had I ever slept in a teepee.



ALL THE LADIES, including Marie Rohleder of York, at the Blue Ridge Rifles Muzzleloader Club's first women's primitive rendezvous lived a colonial lifestyle.

This ladies only event was designed to give women opportunities to shoot in a non-competitive setting and learn new craft-oriented skills, all while enjoying the fellowship of old and new acquaintances. And although the event was just for women, it came about through the efforts of both the female and male members of Blue Ridge Rifles.

While I was not prepared for the primitive, pre-1840 lifestyle, I admired the 40 women who set up canvas tents, dug a fire pit and made delicious meals over an open campfire. Utensils and cookware of the 1700s graced each tent site, and the women dressed in period attire, head to toe.

Even flashlights were taboo. Candle lanterns lighted the way in the darkness, making a picturesque nighttime scene that captured my heart. I was immediately transformed into a colonial encampment, and I felt a oneness with my ancestors.

While some women came to shoot, the history angle intrigued many. "It's the living history experience that appeals to me," said C. Davis of Schaefferstown. "No book has ever taught my children like living history events. Things such as preparing meals, living and sleeping in a teepee, and making period clothes from appropriate materials have taught my children an appreciation for our ancestors."

Ann Marie Hughes of Zion Grove has been attending rendezvous since she was six. "I love history, and this is living it," said Hughes.

"I enjoy camping, and I come to the rendezvous with my family, but I brought my 10-year-old daughter so we could spend time together," said Eleanor Sweeney of

Newmanstown, one of two women to bring children for the 2-day event.

While all the women enjoyed the camaraderie, shooting was an optional part of the weekend activities. Henry Rohleder, one of only two men present at the shooting range, explained the details of shooting a muzzleloader.

For first-timers like myself, the instruction was necessary. "Always measure the powder charge, and never prime a flintlock or cap a percussion rifle until ready to shoot," were words I recall Rohleder saying. I felt at ease shooting a caplock for the first time and brought home my target as a souvenir.

Shooting, however, was just a small part of the weekend activities, which included a tea party — complete with fine china, seminars on stenciling, peyote weaving, weaving and spinning and bead making. A community meal, much like today's covered-dish suppers, filled the air with sweet aromas. When the table was spread with cast iron pots and skillets, it was like a scene from the movie "The Last of the Mohicans."

Most of the women attended the weekend event to relax. Bonnie Hricisin of Summit Hill wanted to get a break from her children, husband, job and life in the fast lane. Crystal Dieffenbacher of Cogan Station came to see old friends. Frances Kovalewski of Ringtown wanted to escape



PEG ADAMS of Bernville practicing her shooting skills at the rendezvous.



ROBIN THOMAS of Mertztown in her buckskin attire at the rendezvous.

everyday routine and stress. Cheri Dieffenbacher wanted to enjoy the outdoors. Peg Adams of Bernville admitted this was her first women-only event, and she enjoyed learning how to rough it.

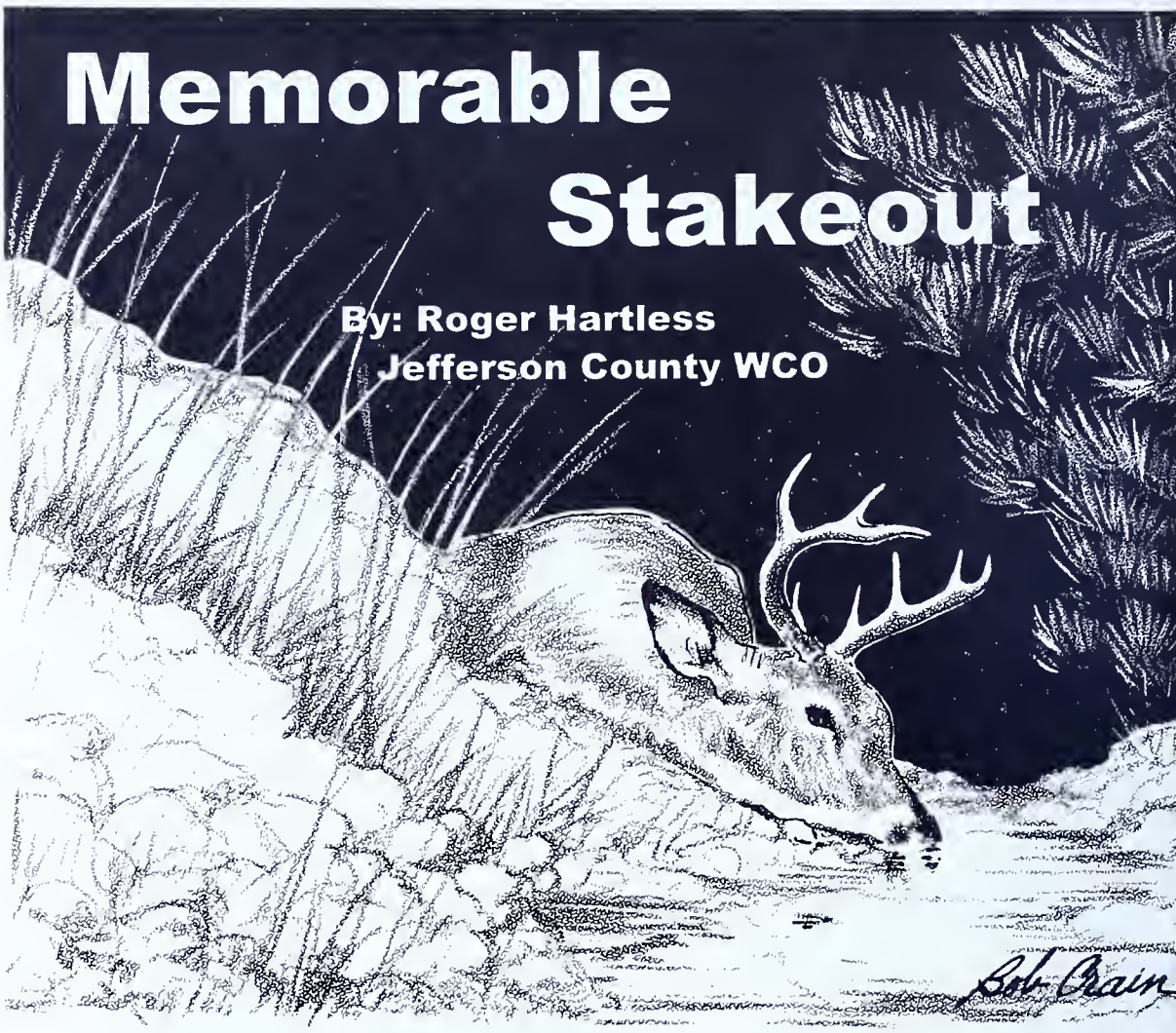
The rendezvous was a time of reflection and relaxation for all the women who braved the elements. They proved to themselves that they could set up camp and cook over an open campfire. They were indeed pioneer women blazing the trail for next year's women's primitive rendezvous, which will be held the weekend after Mother's Day.

Founded in 1976, Blue Ridge Rifles owns its 22-acre range, located a few miles from the remains of Fort Dietrich Snyder, which predates the French and Indian War. The self-supporting club holds five rendezvous each year, including an informal shoot during the Fourth of July, a shoot over Labor Day weekend, and a primitive only event in October.

For more information about Blue Ridge Rifles, contact Nancy Newton at 570-429-1188 during the day or 570-622-8855 during the evening. □

Memorable Stakeout

By: Roger Hartless
Jefferson County WCO



A COUPLE years ago, because of two vacant districts in Forest County, I was assigned townships to patrol there in addition to my Jefferson County district. On Friday, October 8, 1999, I was patrolling near Marienville in Forest County when I received a radio call from Clarion County Deputy Steve Good.

I met Steve a few minutes later, and he told me that one of the Cook Forest State Park rangers had come across a couple of men dragging a 4-point buck up out of a small ravine to a vehicle parked along the road. The ranger checked the deer and found that it was not tagged. One of the men, Bob, claimed that he had killed the deer with a bow. When asked about the tag, Bob said that he must have lost his license, because when he went to tag the deer, he discovered that his license wasn't on his coat. The ranger asked for ID, and Bob went to the car to get it. He came back with his hunting license. Bob said his license must have come unpinned while he was driving the car, because it was lying on the front seat. Anyhow, he would just go ahead and tag the deer. The ranger told him that was okay, and in the meantime, he would fill out a report form on the deer.

Later that day, when the ranger and Steve Good met up, the ranger told Steve what had happened, and he gave Steve a copy of the report form he had filled out. Realizing that Bob's account of his reappearing license sounded too convenient,

Steve and I went to talk to the ranger before he left for the day.

The ranger told us that when he first noticed the car, the trunk was open, but the two men were down over the bank near Troutman Run Creek. Neither was carrying any archery equipment. They claimed that they had put their stuff in the car, then went back after the deer. Although what they had told the ranger may have been the truth, I still wanted to talk to Bob and his hunting buddy.

Steve and I went to Bob's place, and I introduced myself when I met him on his front porch. I told him I needed to ask him some questions about the deer he had taken earlier that day. Bob said that he and Kevin had been archery hunting in the morning, and he had killed a 4-point, and in the process of dragging it back to the car they were checked by the park ranger. Bob told me the same story about losing then finding his license, and when he showed me the license, I noticed the deer tag was missing. Hoping to check the deer and tag, I asked if he would let me see the deer. Bob said that I could see it, but that the head, hide and tag went into the dumpster shortly after they got back with the deer. The sanitation company, he said, had emptied the dumpster.

There is a landfill just up the road from Bob's place, so I figured if I got there quick enough, I might be able to find the deer head, tag and hide before it got covered over. I thanked Bob for his cooperation and walked toward my vehicle. As I did, I glanced over at Bob's car and noticed a compound bow on the back seat and a rifle leaning up against the front seat. Now I really wanted to find the hide from Bob's deer.

Steve and I went to the landfill, but, as luck would have it, Bob's trash had already been dumped. I learned that landfills cover trash with dirt almost immediately after it is dumped, and everything that would have been in Bob's dumpster was now under several tons of dirt.

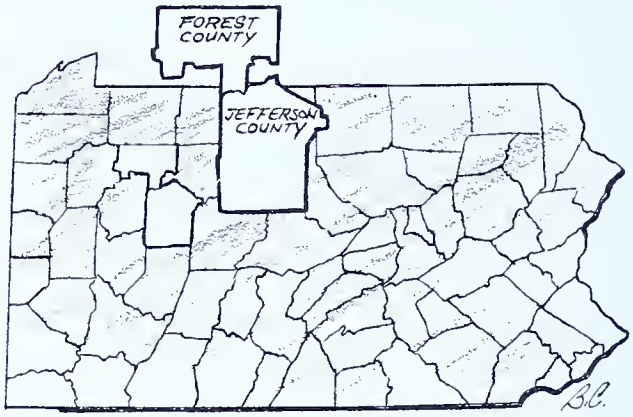
Earlier, I had radioed Clarion County WCO Dave Beinhaur and told him that I could use some help, and that I would be at the landfill. Dave met Steve and me, and we brought him up to speed on what was going on. Dave and I figured that the best thing we could do now was to go to the area where the ranger had seen Bob and Kevin with the deer, find the gut pile, and look for signs of foul play.

After arriving at the spot, Dave, Steve and I had barely started looking around when Dave yelled that we had to get out of here. Wondering what in the heck he was talking about, I went over to where he was standing. There in the creek lay a dead 8-point buck with a drag rope around its antlers. The entrails had been removed, and a wound on the deer was from a gunshot, not from an arrow. Dave said that he would stay with the deer, and that Steve and I should get the patrol vehicles out of the area before the individuals coming for the deer saw them. Steve and I did just that, and about an hour later, after gathering up some equipment, I had Steve drop me off where Dave was staking out the deer. Steve hid in an unmarked vehicle up the road, at a place where he could see traffic coming and going, but where no one would notice him. Now, the wait was on.

Dave and I found a big cherry tree on the hillside opposite the deer and the road to hide behind. To pass the time, we shared stories about some of our better cases, and after dark, watched spotters come and go. About 10:45 things got interesting. A vehicle came down the road and stopped right where Bob's car had been parked when the ranger had encountered him earlier in the day. We heard two doors open then close. Because one of the individuals had a small flashlight, we could see that they were going down

over the bank toward the deer in the creek. I couldn't help but wonder if this was actually happening, or if I had nodded off and was dreaming. When Dave asked if I wanted to go after them, I knew it was for real. "No," I quietly responded. "Not until they get the deer."

The two grabbed the deer and were struggling to get it up the bank. "Now," I said, and we rushed toward the suspects. With flashlights on and yelling, "State officers, stop!" we made our way down the hill and across the creek. The two individuals made a dash for their truck. Only one of the men had a flashlight, and the one without didn't fare too well. I caught up with him and told him to stay put. The person with the light and I got to the pickup at about the same time. Again I yelled, "State officer, don't move!" He uttered some unmentionables and said that we had scared him to death. "Okay, now, put your hands on the truck and don't take them off," I said.



About that time, Dave escorted the other individual to the truck. I recognized one of the men as Kevin, Bob's hunting buddy from earlier in the day. The other man, Todd, I had never seen before. Dave radioed for Steve to come over, and when he arrived, he told us that before it got dark he had seen a car that he thought was Bob's cruising the area. Dave and I dragged the deer up to the road and loaded it onto the patrol vehicle. Then we went down to the Cook Forest Park Office, where we could gather IDs and get statements.

Kevin told us that he had seen the 8-point while hunting with Bob earlier that morning. After being checked by the ranger and helping Bob skin his deer, Kevin returned with a rifle and shot the 8-point. After dressing the deer, he stashed it in the creek, figuring he could get it later. Todd said that he was at Bob's when Kevin told him that he needed help with something. He didn't ask questions; he just got in the truck. Todd said that it wasn't until Kevin stopped the truck where the deer was hidden that he found out what Kevin wanted him to do.

After getting their story, we went to Bob's. Kevin showed us the gun he had used to kill the deer. Bob was conveniently unavailable to talk to us that night. Later, when we talked to him, he denied having any knowledge of the deer Kevin had shot, even though Kevin told us that he was planning to take the deer to Bob's to cut it up. I filed charges on Kevin and Todd for possessing an unlawfully taken deer, and Bob was charged for an improperly tagged deer and not displaying a hunting license. All three pled guilty.

This case is a memorable one for me for a couple of reasons. One, because it came together so well. So many times we sit, watch and wait, only to go home cold, tired and empty-handed. The second reason I will remember this case is because during the first week of buck season, WCO Dave Beinhaur passed away. That night, waiting for the culprits to come for the 8-point, I really got to know Dave, and I'll always be grateful for the opportunity and the time we shared together. □

FIELD NOTES

Different Ornament

CENTRE — During Christmas week I had to remove a bear that had climbed a tree adorned with lights in downtown State College. I'm not sure if it was the spirit of the holiday that attracted the bear, but it sure looked like he was having a good time until I showed up with the dart gun. I did say, "Merry Christmas," though, before darting him.

— WCO MICHAEL G. ONDIK, PORT MATILDA



Wrong Eagle

TRAINING SCHOOL — Trainee Richard Danley asked for directions to the Southwest Region Office in Ligonier, so I told him to look for the Giant Eagle right across from the office. He told me later that he had passed the office because he was looking for a large statue of a bald eagle and didn't notice the grocery store.

—TRAINEE BRIAN E. WITHERITE, HARRISBURG

Couldn't Let 'Em Go

MONROE — On January 19 three deer bounded across the road in front of my vehicle. Nothing unusual about that except that all three were still sporting 8-point racks.

— WCO RANDY L. SHOUP, LONG POND

Rollin' Along

SOMERSET — While stocking pheasants, I've seen marsh hawks and red-tailed hawks take birds, but this fall I witnessed, for the first time, a Cooper's hawk try to take a pheasant. Just as a released ringneck was preparing for a landing, the Cooper's dove for the kill. The pheasant, seeing the hawk at the last second, hit the ground and rolled into a ball. As the pheasant rolled, the hawk struck it several times but couldn't get a firm hold. As quickly as the hawk appeared it was gone, and the pheasant jumped to its feet and ran into nearby cover.

— WCO DANIEL W. JENKINS, BERLIN

Topsy-Turvy

GREENE — Overall it remained relatively warm here after Christmas, and while hunting with the muzzleloader one day I saw large flocks of robins, and heard grouse drumming and turkeys gobbling.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Jumpin' to Conclusions

BERKS — After completing a furbearer program at a school in my district I was asked to identify what was thought to be the tooth of a large prehistoric animal, possibly that of a sabertooth tiger, found along the banks of the Schuylkill River. After a moment examining the possible artifact, everyone was disappointed when I explained it was only the shed horn of a goat.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Good Report

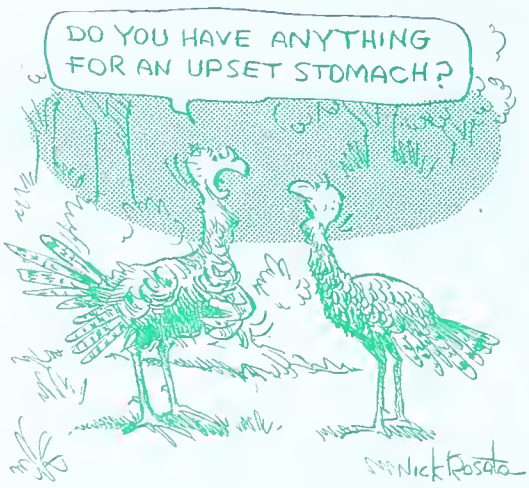
HUNTINGDON — After talking to and checking many rabbit hunters, it appears that last season was one of the best in years.

— WCO PHIL LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Beach Comer

TRAINING SCHOOL — Within a half hour after arriving at my field training assignment in Monroe County, I was knee deep in water, trying to remove a deer from a swimming pool. This would have been no big deal if the deer had been dead or was in an in-ground pool.

— TRAINEE ERIC R. HORSH, HARRISBURG



Tough as Nails

BRADFORD — Don Crisman of Troy told Deputy Charlie Fox that he killed a 23-pound gobbler last season that had a couple of 2-inch roofing nails in its crop.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

That's a New One

VENANGO — I stopped a spotlighter who was shining his light on buildings when he told me that he knew we were out looking for poachers because he saw the "chemical" deer, and he knew it was fake because it had green eyes.

— WCO LEO C. YAHNER, FRANKLIN

They're Here

JUNIATA — In the last few years bears, bobcats, beavers, coyotes, ospreys and bald eagles have become much more common here, but the most recent newcomer has been the otter. Wildlife adapts to humans, but can humans learn to live with wildlife?

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Clothespins?

TRAINING SCHOOL — On field assignment we were instructed to bring back jaws from roadkilled deer for aging. I learned in a hurry, however, that I shouldn't have wrapped them in plastic bags before bringing them back to the school. I'm sure glad my fellow classmates are very forgiving.

— TRAINEE MATTHEW M. GREBECK, HARRISBURG

Lifelike

BUCKS — Deputy David Bonham got a report about a 6-point buck being held in a dog pen. The lady calling in had seen the deer in the pen for several days, and she said she didn't think it was legal to possess a deer. Dave followed up on the tip and then had to inform the lady that it was legal to keep a 3-D archery target in a dog pen.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, RICHLANDTOWN

He Didn't

HUNTINGDON — The academic requirements of our WCO trainees must be evident to the public, because while on field assignment, Trainee Brian Witherite went with me to talk to a man about a disability permit. As I was explaining the permit requirements, the man told me to be quiet so he could talk to the educated one.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Despicable

UNION — Last January Deputy Tilghman Smith and I were sent to Stoney Run Road in western Union County, where forestry workers had found an injured deer. The young doe had to be destroyed, and tracks in the snow told the story. It seems two snowmobile operators had chased and then ran over the deer, breaking both of its back legs. The individuals then got off their machines to chase the deer into a thicket where they left it to die. If anyone knows who is responsible for this senseless act, please let us know.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

One Tough Bird

TRAINING SCHOOL — We trainees were required to identify more than 70 game bird and songbird species, and many of them have peculiar names, such as the loggerhead shrike or the rufous-sided towhee. My classmates thought it was amusing, though, when I identified the belted kingfisher as the steel-belted kingfisher.

— TRAINEE MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, HARRISBURG

Productive

An inspection of 88 bluebird boxes in Greene County revealed that 59 had been occupied by bluebirds, five by wrens, six by swallows, two by mice, one by vireos, one by hornets, five were empty and nine were missing. Maybe the birds liked the houses so much that they took them south for the winter.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Whole Lot of Bull

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was delighted when I heard I was going to Elk County on field training assignment last fall because I had always wanted to work with elk. The thrill wore off quick, however, after relocating seven bulls in three days. I learned firsthand just how heavy a 900-pound elk really is.

— TRAINEE RODNEY MEE, HARRISBURG

Sure Hope it Was

WYOMING — Two ladies here saw a bobcat get clobbered by a car, causing it to summersault through the air and plummet to the berm of the road in a motionless heap. They had been watching the cat for an hour when I arrived, then pleaded with me to help it, despite its ability to move only its head. Thinking the worst, I said I'd do my best. As I drew near, the bobcat gazed back at me then suddenly sprang to its feet and vanished into some nearby brush. The ladies were extremely impressed and said it must have been my uniform.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Unfortunate

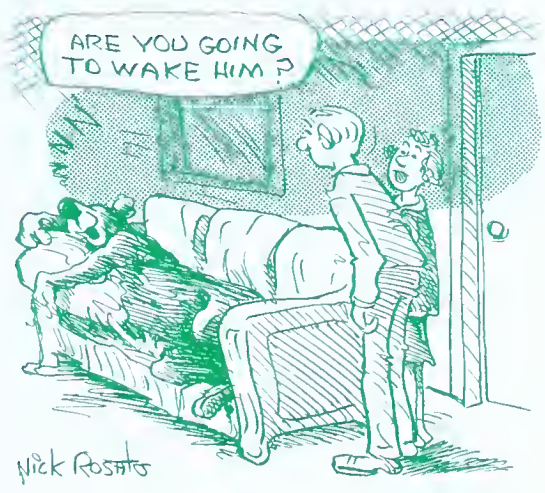
LAWRENCE — Every WCO hopes to get through the hunting seasons without any shooting incidents occurring in their districts. I thought I had made it through, too, until I received a call on the last Saturday in January about a group of hunters who were rabbit hunting when one man shot his partner in the leg. One hunter's failure to make sure what lay beyond his target cut short an enjoyable day.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PROSPECT

Got the Wrong Guy

ERIE — Last winter Deputy James Fife had to put down a deer that an individual had witnessed being chased by dogs. Free roaming dogs can have a big impact on wildlife, especially during the winter. This is unfortunate for the coyote, which gets blamed for many of these incidents.

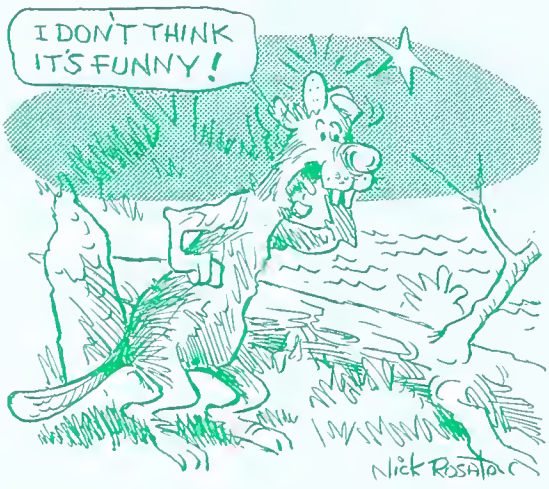
— WCO DARIN L. CLARK, ELGIN



Make Yourself at Home

CAMBRIA — Bears have an amazing ability to adapt to their surroundings, so it was no surprise when deputies Phil Andraychak and Bill McCombie got a call about a bear at a residence in Lilly that had decided to hibernate in a couch located on the front porch. The bear had removed the cushions and stuffing to make it just right.

— WCO SHAWN HARSHAW, NANTY GLO



Made My Day

CRAWFORD — Knowing my affection for beavers, my nephew, William Kosciuszko, told me a little joke. What's it called when a beaver drops a tree on itself? A "chewicide."

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Good Advice

FULTON — As the 25th Class enters the field, I can't believe that a year has passed since I was in their shoes. This transition period is difficult for the new officers, with finding a new home and relocating a family, but it can be made easier with the help of local deputies and sportsmen. If your area is receiving a new WCO, make it a point to welcome him or her into your community. I'm grateful to those here who have done that for me, and I'm also grateful to be officially relieved of my rookie status.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Special Thanks

CHESTER — The Spring City Fire Company, police and the Spring-Ford Rescue Squad saved a young doe that had fallen through the ice and was trapped in a pond on the last day of muzzleloader season. These rescuers, who nearly all were hunters, spent nearly an hour saving the deer. Some people just wouldn't understand.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, UWCHLAND

Bird of a Different Feather

VENANGO — A man reported that a hawk had flown into his window then flipped up on the roof of his garage and died. As we routinely pick up dead protected birds for mounting, I asked if he knew what kind of hawk it was. He said that it was big, brown, had long claws, a large beak and a black band on its tail, but he wasn't sure what it was. As we are accustomed to people having difficulty with identifying birds, I wasn't too surprised to find a ruffed grouse.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Ice Hockey?

WASHINGTON — WCO Doug Dunkerley and I were watching some geese sitting on an ice-covered pond when we noticed some turkeys coming down through the trees. All of a sudden the turkeys ran out onto the ice and started chasing the geese. It seems they weren't going to allow any other birds to invade their territory.

— DEPUTY BETH FIFE, VENETIA



Mating Season

POTTER — The day before Groundhog's Day three woodchucks were seen along Route 6, despite a foot of snow and subfreezing temperatures. I wonder if they were doing some scouting for their holiday?

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, CLOUDERSPORT

Sacrifice

MERCER — While checking a small stream for beaver sets, Deputy Al Harvey realized that there is more than one reason for requiring underwater beaver sets to have an extension wire with a durable name tag above the water/ice level. The tag above permits checking without disturbing sets, and it also lets someone know there is a set before he puts his foot somewhere he'd rather not. Al can now empathize with a beaver. We all agreed that Al went above and beyond the call of duty.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE



A Real Gem

SNYDER — On the last day of bear season Richard Wells met his nephew, John Wells, on a trail, and having no prior luck, John asked his uncle where he should go to find a bear. Richard picked up a rock, threw it down into a thick laurel patch, then told his nephew to hunt where the stone landed. John did, and a few hours later, he shot a 215-pound bear at that very spot.

— WCO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Something to Remember

SCHUYLKILL — Not many hunters take a bear before bagging their first buck, but 19-year-old Dan Leffler of Tremont did just that last season.

— WCO STEPHEN HOWER, PINE GROVE

Hotspot

In January I saw four bald eagles in the same tree near the Lackawaxen Pool on the Delaware River.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Cooperation

TIOGA — After a New York resident unlawfully killed an 11-point buck in his state with a centerfire rifle (sections of New York are shotgun only), he tagged it with a Pennsylvania deer tag and tried to get it mounted here. My neighboring New York DEC officer, Mark Fey, and I went to work on each side of the border to successfully prosecute the violator in both states.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Good Advice

DELAWARE — Myself and many other WCOs often hear from reliable people that they've seen mountain lions. There are no native or wild mountain lions in Pennsylvania. Many of these reported sightings are bobcats, large dogs or a mountain lion that has escaped from a menagerie, or released by a person who has had one of the big cats as a pet. Reporting a sighting immediately could clear up some of the mysteries.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, EDGEMONT

Hitchhiker

LYCOMING — I was checking the oil in my truck one day when after popping the hood I came face-to-face with a large raccoon. After recovering my wits, I peeked in again but the coon had disappeared. Thinking it had dropped down and ran off, after traveling 100 miles I decided to look again to make sure the raccoon had flown the coop. I was surprised, instead, to find the animal curled up on the engine block—acting like it owned the place. This time, when it slid down into the transmission coils, I grabbed a foot and pulled the unhappy coon out.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, WILLIAMSPORT

Harshaw named deputy executive director

HOWARD L. "LARRY" HARSHAW, a Game Commission officer with nearly 30 years of service, has been named Deputy Executive Director, in charge of law enforcement, land management and field operations.

"I am looking forward to working with Larry in his new capacity," Executive Director Vern Ross said when announcing Harshaw's promotion. "Larry will be a very valued team member who brings a lot of expertise to this position. He has the respect of the field officers and of his fellow regional supervisors and directors."

Ross noted that appointing Harshaw to this position, which had been vacant since 1997, is consistent with a recommendation of the USFWS's Management Assistance Team (MAT) Report.

Harshaw, 56, served as director of the Northwest Region since 1990, after starting his agency career as a member of the 14th Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1970.

A native of Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, Harshaw was assigned to a district in southern Blair County in 1971. In 1974, he moved on to central Crawford County. Next came a WCO assignment in northern Blair County, which for a time included dual responsibility for a northern Cambria County district. This was unusual in that the two districts were in two different regions. He was selected as a Game Commission Outstanding Employee in 1977.



Harshaw was promoted to Law Enforcement Supervisor in the Southcentral Region in 1985, serving in that capacity in the Huntingdon office until his promotion to Northwest Region director.

Prior to joining the Game Commission, Harshaw had extensive management experience in private industry. He is a founder and charter member of the Blair County Conservation Officers Association and is a past president of the Huntingdon County Association of Retarded Citizens.

Harshaw and his wife, Bonnie, have three sons: Larry Jr., Jon and Shawn; and one daughter, Shannon.

Commission officers on Governor's Twenty

FIVE Game Commission wildlife conservation officers earned places on the Governor's Twenty for 1999, an honor reserved for the top law enforcement handgun marksmen in the state.

The quintet consists of WCOs Skip Littwin, Steven Bernardi, David Carlini, Gary W. Packard and Guy Hansen. While the Game Commission has been represented on the Governor's Twenty for many years, this marked the first time that WCOs made up a quarter of the contingent.

In qualifying for the Governor's Twenty for the 12th consecutive year, Littwin had an average of 1479.3-83.6x. He ranked fifth overall.

Packard appeared on the list for the ninth time, with an average of 1461.6-70.3x, 13th overall. Both Littwin and Packard are assigned to the Bureau of Law Enforcement in the Harrisburg headquarters.

Bernardi placed eighth, with an average of 1474.3-82.6x. He's a Land Management Group Supervisor in the Southcentral Region. Carlini, a Clearfield County WCO, ranked 10th with a score of 1469.6-76.3x. Hansen, assigned to a York County district, was 17th on the list, with a score of 1447.3-61.6x

Included in the makeup of the Governor's Twenty are officers from municipal police departments, the Pennsylvania State Police, U.S. Customs Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Packard ranked fifth and Bernardi eighth in Pennsylvania Police Combat Association individual semi-automatic pistol competition, with respective averages of 478-34x and 475.3-29.3x.

Angove recognized for conservation volunteerism

WILLIAM ANGOVE, a Game Commission deputy wildlife conservation officer in Bradford County, was recognized during the 45th Annual Eastern Sports and Outdoor Show for his volunteerism and conservation efforts.

"Bill Angove is an important member of the Commission's deputy force and is highly thought of by those who know him," said Vern Ross, PGC Executive Director. "While Angove's example of volunteerism is emulated by nearly all of our deputies, he has, in many cases, gone above and beyond the call of duty. He routinely demonstrates his commitment to Pennsylvania's wildlife resource and rich hunting heritage."

A resident of Troy, Angove has volunteered and worked as a DWCO for approximately seven years. He has been very active in all phases of the Game Commission's work and assists WCO William Bower in Bradford County. An active HTE instructor, Angove coordinates all HTE courses for the Troy/Canton area, including the assignment of volunteer instructors.

Angove also has helped set up the Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education Field Day in the spring and fall,

and assisted in many programs at Troy Middle School, including arranging a field day for the 7th grade class and a conservation course at the school. He also helped with the Pennsylvania Youth Hunter Education Challenge.

A retired Troy Area School District teacher, Angove and his wife, Cheryl, have three children and one grandchild.

Next phase of turkey study underway

A STUDY to determine why wild turkey populations are suppressed in Turkey Management Area 7B has moved to the next phase on the Michaux State Forest in southcentral Pennsylvania.

Under the direction of PGC wildlife biologist Mary Jo Casalena, winter live trapping of turkeys was conducted at as many as three sites. "The goal is to attach radio transmitters to at least 32 hens, to establish an overall sample size of 60," Casalena said. "These birds will be monitored through the spring nesting season to determine mortality and nesting success."

Casalena noted that 28 hens were fitted with radio transmitters last September. Of that number, 14 survived. Of the 14 that died, five were legally harvested during the fall turkey season; three were killed by predators; one was a crippling loss during the hunting season; one fell victim to poaching; and four died of unknown causes.

The study began last September, when a limited number of birds were trapped and equipped with transmitters in an effort to determine causes of fall mortality. The research program will require about two full years to complete and includes two fall hunting seasons.

The Game Commission and sportsmen's groups have been concerned about the apparent suppression of wild turkeys in the South Mountain region for several years. It was for this reason that Turkey Management Area 7B was split out of TMA 7 a few years ago and a short, fall hunting season was put in place.

In January, Commissioners gave preliminary approval to an Oct. 28-Nov. 4 fall turkey hunting season in TMA 7B. Along with TMAs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8, TMA 7A is proposed to have a fall turkey hunting season on Oct. 28-Nov. 18. Both proposed seasons must be approved in April before taking effect.



BARRY WARNER, left, Northeast Region Director, receives a certificate of appreciation for the support given to the Fish & Boat Commission's boating education programs. Presenting the award are Diane Grimes, PFBC deputy and safe boating instructor, and Jim Stout, PFBC District Officer.

HTE website unveiled

TO REINFORCE the importance of hunter education, the Game Commission has added a Hunter-Trapper Education section to its homepage: **www.pgc.state.pa.us**.

"In addition to providing specific information about upcoming HTE courses, hunters can refresh their knowledge of hunting safety with the HTE quiz," said Keith A. Snyder, chief of the Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education Division. "We plan to expand this section in the near future, by adding video clips, a section on bowhunter education, plus other valuable information to promote hunter safety."

The HTE section will take visitors to schedules of classes; hunter-trapper education requirements of other states and provinces; information on how to become a volunteer HTE instructor; the "Ten Commandments of Firearm Safety"; steps to replace a lost certification card; and hot links to other hunter education websites. The section lists the history of HTE in Pennsylvania; describes the purpose of the educational program; and details who needs HTE.

River otter license plate

A NEW motor vehicle license plate featuring a river otter has been released to benefit the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. The otter plate replaces the saw-whet owl plate, the first and most popular specialty plate ever offered in Pennsylvania.



River otters may now be found throughout most of the state, largely because of projects conducted through the Wild Resource Conservation Fund.

The Wild Resource Conservation Fund coordinates and administers programs to benefit nongame wildlife and native plant programs, but it receives no money from the state's General Fund. Instead, it's supported through voluntary state income tax refund donations, license plate sales and direct donations.

The river otter plate costs $35, $15 of which goes to the Fund, $20 to the state Motor License Fund.

To obtain an application for the new river otter plate, write: WRCF, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Pymatuning visitors center to open April 1

The Pymatuning visitors center will open Saturday, April 1. An extensive collection of wildlife mounts, a natural habitat display, and an activity center are some of the indoor highlights. In addition, a replica of an early 1900s hunter's cabin, constructed within the center's main building, is quickly becoming a favorite of visitors. The cabin exhibit highlights the drastic decline of Pennsylvania's wildlife populations in the late 19th century, and the Game Commission's role, working with sportsmen, in returning wildlife populations to healthy numbers.

Outside, a wheelchair accessible self-guided nature trail, a bald eagle viewing shelter, and wildlife habitat demonstration areas provide additional educational and enjoyable experiences.

The visitors center will be open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. There is no charge for admission. Educational materials, patches, wildlife stamps, and other items are on sale.

Groups are welcome. Please call in advance to make arrangements for special programs, (814-863-5545).

The center is located in Crawford County, 2 miles south of Linesville on the shore of Pymatuning Lake.



TONY HUDAK, President of the Red Rock Chapter of the NWTF, received a certificate of appreciation from Land Management Officer Ed Zindell, in recognition of all the work the chapter conducted over the past four years on SGL 292. Work the chapter helped conduct includes 2 acres of border cutting, the creation of a one-acre herbaceous opening, the planting of more than 1,600 trees and shrubs, and the erection of squirrel and bluebird nest boxes.

New, Toll-Free Region Office Phone Numbers

The following toll-free numbers are now in operation:

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Continued from page 2

The students of the 25th class would like to thank all the field training officers and their families, as well as other employees and deputy wildlife conservation officers who contributed to our invaluable field training experience.

We are embarking on this career during a period of transition. During the early years of the Game Commission, the terms wildlife protection and wildlife management were misnomers. The combined forces of habitat loss, market hunting, and absence of game laws led to the extirpation and severe population declines of many wildlife species. It may seem inconceivable to some that at one time the white-tailed deer was a rare sight in Pennsylvania, that our waterways held no beaver, and that wild turkeys were nearly nonexistent. Simply put, wildlife could not be protected or managed if it wasn't there.

Only after laws were enacted, biologists assembled, and a corps of dedicated game protectors established were those species able to be reintroduced. The positive effects of wildlife management, land management, and wildlife law enforcement in the past 100 years has been dramatic. In just the past few decades, through the work of the Game Commission, other state wildlife agencies, and an array of conservation organizations, elk, bald eagles, ospreys, river otters and fishers are also now thriving in many parts of the state.

Today, a major challenge before this agency lies in preserving the traditions and ideals inherent in its proud history while evolving with the needs and expectations of society. Wildlife populations must be balanced with regard to both the land's biological carrying capacity and with society's cultural expectations. The former can be scientifically quantified; the latter is not so easy to define.

The perpetuation of Pennsylvania's hunting and trapping heritage, regeneration of its forests, and sound management of wildlife can be successfully brought about only through the interaction between the Game Commission and an informed, educated public.

A sense of optimism seems to be rising across the ranks of today's Game Commission. Under its current leadership, actions have been taken to more clearly define the agency's mission. Positive steps have been initiated to improve communications and encourage input from the hunting and nonhunting public. Wildlife management objectives, based on sound scientific principles, are being shared with sportsmen, conservation groups, and the general public more than ever before. This is an exciting time to begin a career as a WCO.

On behalf of the 25th class, I want to assure the residents and hunters of Pennsylvania that we are uniquely prepared, and fully committed to deliver the highest quality of wildlife conservation services.

The 25th class would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the training school staff, especially to our two resident instructors, Mr. Grohol and Mr. Larnerd, who spent countless hours contributing to our professional development.

Lastly, we would like to thank our families and friends. We are especially grateful for family members and friends who influenced us so strongly during our formative years. We thank those who instilled in us a sense of purpose, a spirit of integrity, and a profound appreciation for our natural world. Without your encouragement and support, we would not be here today. This graduation ceremony is as much for you as it is for us. Thank you.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

That old saying that there are two sides to every story is generally true, and particularly with conservation issues, it pays to view them in shades of gray versus black and white.

Another View

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I took part in presenting a basic outdoor photography seminar at Jennings Environmental Education Center in Butler County. More than 20 people attended and we had a great day. Everyone learned something new about outdoor photography. One of the sessions was hands-on, with the attendees shooting preselected types of scenes outside in the woods, near the center building.

Much of the seminar's message was simply to encourage the budding shutterbugs to pay attention to the composition of their photos. In the field, they tried placing the subject off-center, adding diagonals that draw the eye into the photograph, shooting from a high or low angle, and turning the camera from horizontal to vertical. All of these techniques gave them a new perspective, a different way of looking at the outdoors — another view.

Linda Steiner



Another view has been the theme (and title) of this column for nearly 15 years. In that time, I've explored outdoor and hunting experiences from my personal point of view, which by definition is another view than yours. I hope that along the way we've shared experiences, and that my thoughts about the outdoors have occasionally paralleled yours. But they can't be identical. My life has been distinct from each of yours (as you differ between yourselves), so whatever I write has to be another view.

When I photograph in black and white and see the image emerging in the pan of developer in my darkroom, I watch the grays emerging, pale pearl, silver and steel, soot. I have rarely, if ever, seen an absolute white or a total black appear on the photographic paper. In black and white photography, the world exists in shades of gray, complemented by contrasts and enriched

DO WHAT IT takes (like this photographer who took to the water) to get "another view" of the great outdoors.

by textures. If I can believe my pictures, nothing is black and white. We live between extremes.

I've been fortunate to be involved in or, as a media person, become knowledgeable about concerns facing sportsmen and others who enjoy Pennsylvania's wildlife and wild places. Sometimes the sides in an issue were widely separated. They would probably have described the choices they presented as being right or wrong, black or white, one having all the light, the other offering darkness. Yet in these controversies, I was usually struck by the many midtone grays between, the gradients of opinion. Rarely was there a right or wrong answer, just another view.

For example, there's the debate about timbering in the Allegheny National Forest, a dispute that has included lawsuits and even a sit-in at the Forest Service Office. From what I know of the issue, it's not so much over what should be logged and how, as it is a clash of philosophies — either manage the woods, including cutting, or do no timbering at all on the forest.

I've talked to Allegheny National Forest personnel, including those directly involved in overseeing woodland resources, and I've talked to those on the opposing, preservationist side. Both have well thought-out reasons for their stance and have brought up some points I can agree with, as well as others I don't like. The U.S. Forest Service has long had an active timber management program in the Allegheny National Forest; one of the original purposes for the publicly owned forest was to provide a reliable source of wood. Those against tree cutting talk instead about having a natural ecology on the Allegheny National Forest, without human manipulation. They support just letting the forest grow and become what it will.

But in my view — another view — I must consider that I'm a hunter. I enjoy having a wide variety of habitats and types of wildlife on the Allegheny National Forest, so I support a managed forest, one that is logged from time to time. I even like clearcuts, more accurately even-age timber management, if the cuts are in the right places. I know that some trees, such as oaks that will someday provide acorns for wildlife, need full sunlight to grow. The forests we have today in Pennsylvania are a product of the open spaces created decades ago. Maybe I'm being selfish, but I want oaks to be in the future forest.

I want the deer and grouse, the foxes that prowl and the songbirds that flit around the young growth of a regenerating cut. Yet I also appreciated my hike in the Hickory Creek Wilderness Area of the ANF. The wilderness area was set aside as a true preserve, where timbering and roadbuilding are at a halt, where the only changes that occur on the land are those that come naturally. While I walked there one misty day last summer, I heard several trees fall, proving that although the Hickory Creek Wilderness Area won't be changed by man, it will change.

In some places I saw where fallen trees had opened the leafy canopy and new trees were starting up to find a place in the sun. Mushrooms and toadstools on aged stumps showed nature's recycling at work. The wilderness area was a place very much alive, but it was experiencing a different sort of forest life, on a different trajectory, than the sections of the ANF that had been or would be timbered. Trees are replaceable on an 80-year basis, one forester said, sharing his view of timbering, yet the forest remains.

The angles from which we look at hunting make for a constantly changing perspective, too. We go from one view to another view as we gain experience. For instance, I was a recurve bow shooter for years and unsure of the compound and its impact on hunting. Would the compound make bowhunting too easy? I didn't view the compound favorably, at first. Then I bought a compound and learned to shoot it, and my outlook changed. Of course, compounds are the standard of most ar-

chers today. Compound bows didn't make bowhunting easier, just allowed the shooter to hold longer so he could aim better. The deer still needs to be close for a good shot. I have also acquired another view on muzzleloader hunting, now that I've tried it and found I like it and realized how akin to bowhunting that sport is.

With each new activity I try, my view evolves. I now enjoy mountain biking on game lands and state forest roads. My positive view of the sport includes knowing how much fun cycling is for families. Mountain biking woodland paths lets both those barely old enough to pedal, but not big enough for hiking boots, and seniors who can still cycle back-in, but couldn't walk the distance, enjoy the wild outdoors. My opinion of that sport is different from those who have not tried the "quiet wheels," who maybe don't remember what it's like to be too young or who are not yet too old and/or physically unable to hoof very far off the highway into the woods.

When I'm not hunting in winter, I cross-country ski. My view of that activity and what is needed for it (besides snow) have changed with the doing. Last February, I skied on a trail in a state park. Some of the cross-country ski trail was part of the hiking trail. This may sound like a fine, multiple-use idea, but it isn't quite working. Hikers probably see the narrow, "double rail" track that skis make in the snow as a good, compacted place to walk. I've done that in the past and never realized what I was doing to the skiers, until I took up cross-country skiing.

Now I know that the holes the hikers make in the track ruins the trail; skis dip and catch in the holes. I fell several times when that happened to me that day. Skiers I met surmised that the hikers probably "didn't know any better," but they were still annoyed. Now I have another view on what is proper when sharing a hiking trail with skiers. When I'm on the same trail, I walk to the side of the ski track. Another day I might be skiing and be glad a hiker was considerate of me.

Whatever the subject, there is always another view. In photography, besides physically changing a camera angle, different views can be achieved with the use of filters. Most filters are glass caps that fit over the front of the lens. They change the picture subtly or dramatically by coloring or softening it, or they can heighten contrast, making light objects look nearer to white, dark objects closer to black.

A little contrast is good in a photo, but with too much, the middle-of-the-road gray tones, where the details lie, are lost. Too many extremes and the picture is distorted. Skillfully controlling contrast is the mark of a professional photographer. In my views of the outdoors and the field sports, I try to be that kind of pro, one who can look at both ends of the spectrum and find the balance between. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Know Hunting: Truths, Lies & Myths, by Dr. David E. Samuel, published by Know Hunting Publications, P.O. Box 18115, Cheat Lake, WV 26507, www.bowsite.com/knowhunting, 300 pp., $20 plus $2 shipping. Dr. Samuel combines 32 years of wildlife professor experience, 28 years as an outdoor writer and 44 years as a bowhunter to discuss the legal, political, social, biological, economical, spiritual and ethical aspects of hunting. This book is a comprehensive look at the changes that have occurred in the world, as well as the way hunting and hunters have related to those changes.

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer

Land management is a top priority with the PGC, yet in many respects, it's the least understood. Here's a look through the eyes of a LMO of the habitat management activities conducted by the bureau.

LAND MANAGEMENT and habitat development are important functions of the Game Commission. Expenditures for these activities account for the largest percentage of the agency's annual budget. In fiscal year 1999, $23,351,757 was spent on land management activities. Despite being such a major function of the agency, the land management program is also one of our least publicized activities.

Through this column I will cover our land management work from my perspective as a land management officer, what I feel is one of the most interesting and satisfying of all jobs within the Game Commission. I hope to help you understand some of the things you see happening on the game lands, and share with you some of the joys and frustrations that come along with the responsibility of managing these areas for wildlife and people.

Officially called land management group supervisors, we are known to many as land management officers, or LMOs for short. There are 29 of us across the state, and we are graduates of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, and most of us served as WCOs before becoming LMOs. Upon my graduation from the training school, I served as a WCO in Jefferson and then Forest County. I then requested and received a transfer to my present LMO position.

LMOs are responsible for designated areas known as "groups," which are usually comprised of two or more counties. Although LMOs possess the same law enforcement powers as WCOs, our primary responsibility is to manage and develop wildlife habitat on state game lands. We also administer the Farm-Game Cooperative Access Program within our groups.

My group consists of Jefferson and Clarion counties, which are part of the Northwest Region. Within my group are 10 state game lands consisting of approximately 55,000 acres.

On these game lands, we cultivate about 700 acres on a rotational basis, maintain 200 miles of access roads as well as parking lots, storage buildings, vehicles, and many other types of equipment. I also administer seven Farm-Game Project areas within my group, four of which are in Clarion County, consisting of 487 farms with 52,573 acres, and three in Jefferson



STRIP MOWING in the spring on areas managed for rabbits provides succulent herbaceous growth.

County, which includes 397 farms and 56,240 acres.

While I administer the work within my group, the real heroes are the excellent food and cover crews headquartered in each county. These are the people who actually accomplish most of the work. The Jefferson County crew consists of Everett



SPRUCE TREES with branches close to the ground provide winter thermal cover for many species of wildlife.

Reitz, foreman; Lee Jordan, Farm-Game Manager; and Dave Miller and Scott Hepler. The Clarion County crew consists of Gary Maxwell, foreman; Tom Deitz, Farm-Game Manager; and Willard Kline. As we progress through the year ahead, I hope to give you some insight into just how important these people are to achieving our land management goals.

April is really one of my favorite months of the year. The name comes from the Latin word "Aprilis" which means, "to open." Here in Pennsylvania, the appearance of the outdoor world does seem to open up this month. The sow bears with cubs have emerged from their winter dens, turkeys are busy gobbling and strutting, and hens are starting to search for nest sites. Ruffed grouse are drumming, even the squirrels seem to have regained their active lifestyles, running here and there as if on some type of schedule, nipping twigs and buds that are pushing forth. Even though April weather can be unpredictable, we seem to have enough nice days to know that summer is just around the corner. April is also a time for land management activities to shift from winter work to spring activities.

Week One

The crews are busy finishing a boundary line on SGL 31 near Knoxdale. We started painting the line last fall and didn't have time to finish. To keep them clearly marked, we paint game land boundaries every five years. This benefits hunters and other users as well as the neighboring landowners, and creates a well-established reference line for those using topographical maps or those who may be unfamiliar with the area. Game land boundaries are especially hard to paint because of the amount of brush and grapevines that grow up along them. This creates good grouse areas, but causes us to work in 2-man teams, as we must cut our way through some of it. Every time they're cut, they grow back even thicker in about five years. Many a can of paint has been spilled and hats pulled off due to the heavy brush we crawl through to stay on line. Dave Miller and Tom Deitz spot a couple of turkeys while painting.

On days of inclement weather, the crews are busy repairing and preparing our farming equipment for the upcoming planting season. We still have a couple of tractors that are from the early 1970s that require constant upkeep. Most of our farming implements are just as old and need repairs as well.

Thanks to the latest license increase, our group was able to replace our 1962 vintage tractor with a new one, and we hope to replace some of the other worn-out equipment in the near future. It's sure beneficial having crew members such as Lee Jordan and Willard Kline, who used to own and work their own farms. They are an invaluable source of technical knowledge when it comes to repairing, operating and maintaining our farming equipment.

I meet with my foreman to discuss some of the upcoming work, and we set priorities for items that must be accomplished before the end of the month. Planning is a critical aspect of our job. We have to coordinate our supplies, manpower, the moving of equipment, and at the same time deal with weather and equipment breakdowns.

I'm seeing turkeys everywhere. Hearing them gobble and watching them strut is one of the most pleasurable signs of spring. I feel a sense of satisfaction as I hear a grouse drumming from an area we patch-cut on game lands a couple of years ago.

Week Two

We have begun to strip mow grass and clover in our rabbit management areas, to provide nesting areas as well as young, succulent growth for juveniles to feed upon. We will continue to mow about 10 percent of the grass in these areas to limit its height during the major breeding season. These mowed areas are especially important to cottontails when they're close to shrub or escape cover. Proper habitat has more impact upon the rabbit population than any other factor. Good habitat will provide abundant food, breeding areas, and protective and thermal cover, all in the proper spacing and quantities needed to maximize populations. In my group, we have five rabbit management areas.

I'm also busy inspecting areas on SGL 63 near Shippenville for right-of-way permits I issued last summer. I'm doing this to determine if the utility company needs to finalize any work, make repairs, or re-seed any areas that have not attained a suitable catch of grass/legume. When a permit is required for a utility company to create a pipeline or electric line across an existing game lands, I will first inspect the area to determine what impacts it will have on wildlife in the area. Many times a right-of-way is beneficial to wildlife because it creates a herbaceous opening (food plot) in an area that is heavily forested or where woods openings are lacking. Rights-of-way can also be used to create an "edge effect" or shrub layer. Most game species require open area habitat. Rights-of way can also be beneficial to sportsmen for access and reference points, and they're also excellent trapping areas. I have encountered many hunters set up along rights-of-way who are not physically able to walk very far through the uneven terrain of the woods. These rights-of-way allow them to continue to enjoy hunting.

If I determine that a right-of-way will be detrimental to wildlife or the area, I can deny the permit application. If I find that it will fit into the management plan for that particular game lands, and will benefit wildlife, I then draw up a list of special provisions for the utility company to follow. These provisions will address items such as species or mix of grass and legume to be seeded, the number and type of shrubs or trees to be planted, future lime and fertilizer requirements, barricades to be erected, future mowing, work restrictions during hunting seasons, damage and rental payments. These items are explained and discussed with the utility company during an on-site meeting held prior to processing the application. This gives the utility company an opportunity to know what our agency expects from them up front. Usually, the spring following the work completion, I'll return to the right-of-way to see if all the provisions have been met. In the case of the two rights-of-way on SGL 63, I find some minor problems that will need to be addressed. One site has a section that will need to be re-seeded; the other has a couple of small eroded areas that need corrected. I tie some flagging, make a quick sketch and jot down some notes to remind myself when I call the utility company representative. Most companies take care of these types of problems quickly, as we have established a good working relationship with each other.

I should also point out that there are areas on many game lands where utility companies do not have to obtain a permit to create a right-of-way or a gas well. Most

of these companies are also concerned about impacts to wildlife and seek our assistance in planning and laying out these areas. There have been a few companies that I watch closely.

All utility companies, whether they must have permits or not, must work within the regulations established by the Department of Environmental Protection and other state agencies to assure our lands and waters are protected.

Gas and oil production is big in my area, and I spend a considerable amount of time dealing with these companies and their impact upon game lands. I see my job as a local voice for wildlife and sportsmen on these lands purchased with hunting license dollars.

Week Three

This is the week we set up for and take delivery of approximately 200,000 tree seedlings from the Game Commission's Howard Nursery. Jim Bowers and his people at the nursery start two years in advance to provide the state with more than three million healthy trees to be planted for wildlife. They receive seed picked by food and cover crews and other sources, process and plant it, then a year later harvest the seedlings for distribution all across the state.

When we take delivery of seedlings for our group, we bring them back to our Jefferson County headquarters building in Emerickville. We separate, sort, dip and repack the seedlings into small orders for each Farm-Game and Safety-Zone cooperator and sportsman's club, and for planting on each game lands in our group. This process takes timing and cooperation between the crews, the Farm-Game managers, WCOs and deputies to assure that all landowners receive healthy seedlings. Free seedlings are just one of the benefits provided to landowners enrolled in our public access programs. In return for keeping their land open for public hunting and trapping, cooperators also receive signs, *Game News*, additional law enforcement, assistance in improving the wildlife habitat on their land, and some protection from liability through the Land Use Recreation Act of 1966.

We will take the seedlings we intend to plant on game lands and "heel them in" to keep them fresh until we can get them planted. It takes three days to process our seedlings, and a day to clean up. Tom and Lee (our Farm-Game managers) have been delivering seedlings since the second day and will soon have them all distributed to landowners. We process these orders first because the majority of our seedlings go to public access cooperators.

Week Four

As the Farm-Game managers complete their deliveries, the rest of the crews and I start the long tedious process of hand planting thousands of seedlings on game lands. Through habitat studies, we have determined that conifers, such as pine and spruce, are lacking on many of our game lands. Stands of these evergreens are a form of winter thermal cover, which provides protection to wildlife from the wet and cold winds of winter. To provide this particular habitat type, we plant these conifers in ¼-acre or larger blocks along streams, springs, near foodplots and in clearings of deciduous forest. As the trees grow, the blocks will provide winter protection as well as roosting sites, nesting sites, den sites, and food for many wild animals. We plant a lot of spruce trees, because they maintain the low-growing branches (within 15 inches of the ground) that is so valuable to wildlife. Also, white spruce don't seem to be as readily nipped off by deer as some of the other species of conifers.

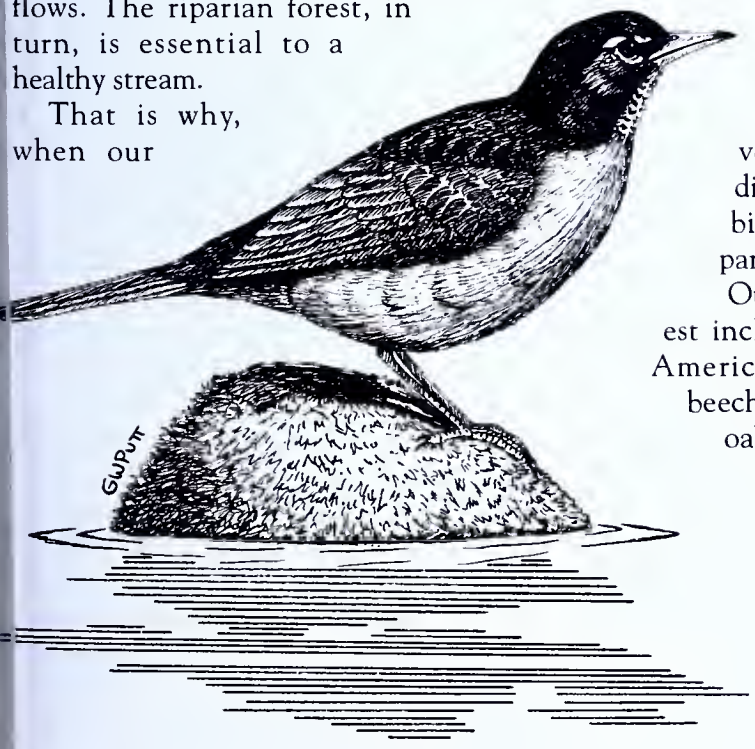
Open areas around gas wells are excellent places to plant wildlife shrubs, such as dogwood, honeysuckle, sawtooth oak and even crabapple. Within the next three weeks, we will hand plant more than 31,000 seedlings on game lands within our group. This planting is hard work, but it creates important habitat for the wildlife of Pennsylvania. □

There is an overwhelming tradition among landowners of fighting back nature and keeping landscapes neat. Messy is good, though, when it comes to wetlands and other habitat types.

Saving Riparian Forests

OUR PLUMMER'S HOLLOW stream is a faint, unnamed blue line on Higbee's stream map of Pennsylvania. Although it's only a mile and a half long and its streambed is less than 10 feet wide, it has a tremendous influence on the streamside, riparian, forest through which it flows. The riparian forest, in turn, is essential to a healthy stream.

That is why, when our neighbor wanted to log the steep mountainside across our private access road we shared with him and then down to the edge of the stream, we fought hard to keep him as far above the road and away from the stream as possible. We knew the forest cover was a buffer for the stream. Furthermore, our son, Mark, had compiled a biological inventory of our property and discovered that the center of biological diversity is the riparian forest.



Our 100-year-old riparian forest includes cucumber magnolia, American basswood, American beech, tulip-tree, red and white oaks, white ash, red maple and black birch. The smaller, coniferous component consists of many large eastern hemlocks and a smattering of mature white pines. Spicebush, rhododendron, witch ha-

zel, mountain laurel and wild hydrangea, as well as a diverse selection of small saplings, make up the understory, and beneath them grow at least 12 species of ferns.

In spring the streambanks are blanketed with purple trillium and foamflower, six species of violets, round-lobed hepatica, sessile and perfoliated bellworts, Canada mayflower, wood betony, trailing arbutus, rue anemone, jack-in-the-pulpit, yellow mandarin, mitrewort, Indian cucumber-root, white clintonia, Solomon's seal and Solomon's plume, and these are but a sampling of spring wildflowers that grace our riparian forest. In early summer Indian pipes and black cohosh light up the dark forest. By the end of August, horsebalm, whitewood asters, bluestemmed goldenrod, orange jewelweed, turtlehead and white snakeroot bloom along the stream and road banks.

Pennsylvania has more than 50,000 miles of streams but 14,000 are in need of restoration, including many sections that have been cleared or straightened for a variety of reasons.

Some of our most exciting sightings of birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals have occurred in the streamside forest. A northern saw-whet owl perched in a sapling near the stream one October night as we drove home from an Audubon meeting. On an April spring night, my husband Bruce and I had our only sighting, so far, of a least weasel as it raced along the streambank side of our road. A silver-haired bat flew in front of our car on the evening of September 1, 1994. Nineteen days later we saw the first eastern coyote on our mountain, as it leaped across in front of the car. In January 1982 our hemlocks hosted our only flock of white-winged crossbills. Common snapping turtles have wandered up from the river several times, and in April 1997, a mink picked through streamside debris during the midday.

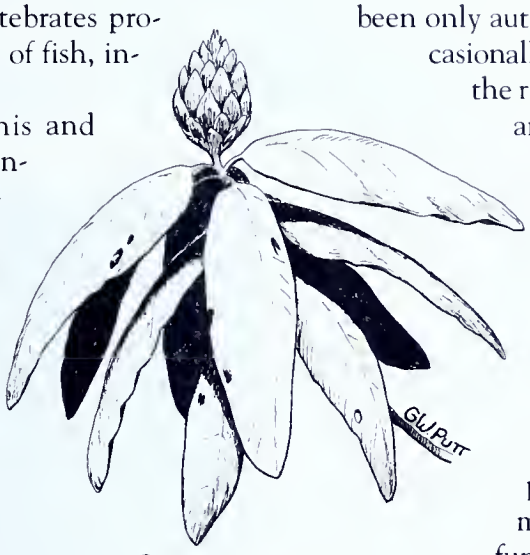
The stream is too small and shallow to harbor fish, but it does harbor a diversity of other water dependent creatures as our son, Dave, discovered, when, as part of a science project in high school, he inventoried their numbers and species. Using a potato rake to churn up the stream bottom, he trapped the small invertebrates in screening he had stretched across the water. He also turned over rocks. In addition to a bevy of salamanders and crayfish, he found a bewildering assortment of tiny organisms and their homes, including three kinds of caddisfly cases, four types of stonefly nymphs, and three species of mayfly nymphs.

All of these so-called stream macroinvertebrates are shredders, collectors or scrapers, and subsist on some form of woody debris. Shredders which include certain species of craneflies, beetles, flies, caddisfly larvae and stonefly nymphs, feed on riparian litter (deciduous leaves, coniferous needles, twigs, branches, bark, nuts and flowers) trapped in stream channels by fallen trees and debris. But first the litter must be changed by microbes and made digestible for the shredders, a process that takes weeks or months, depending on the species and water temperature, as well as the kinds of leaf litter and the season of the year.

Ecologists have found that permanent streams in temperate zones usually have two different kinds of shredders — one for autumn and winter and another for spring and summer. The kind of leaf litter is also important. Litter that rots fast comes from basswood, alder and most herbaceous species. Maples and birches shed medium litter, and oaks, rhododendron, beech, conifers and most ferns shed slow litter.

By feeding on leaf litter, the shredders change larger pieces of litter (known in scientific circles as "coarse particulate organic matters") into smaller pieces mixed in with their own feces (fine particulate organic matters). The fine particulate organic matter, in turn, provides food for the collectors — mayfly nymphs, black fly and midge larvae. The scrapers, most notably some caddisfly larvae, feed on algae that grows on fine particulate organic matter found in rapidly flowing water. All three kinds of stream invertebrates provide food for a variety of fish, including trout.

I learned all of this and more at the Third Annual Coldwater Conference in February 1999, which brought together a wide diversity of people from the public and private sectors interested in restoring riparian buffer zones along the streams and rivers of the commonwealth. To Albert Todd, United States Forest Service liason to the Chesapeake Bay Program, riparian habitat is "a linear system that forms the circulatory system for life."



~Rhododendron~

Pennsylvania has more than 50,000 miles of streams, he told us, but 14,000 are in need of restoration, including many sections that have been cleared or straightened by engineers or farmers. Probably his most profound statement, and one that humans have the most trouble accepting where nature is concerned, is "messy is good." Instead of clearing out the trees and branches that fall into streams, they should be allowed to remain there because they anchor streambed sediment that not only feeds invertebrates, but provides hiding places for them. They, in turn, feed fish. "It's a little known fact," he concluded, "that fish do grow on trees."

I was reminded of the ice storm that brought down more than 100 trees across our stream several winters ago. Many visitors to our property were disturbed because we did not have them harvested by a logger and accused us of "wasting good wood." We, on the other hand, were interested in watching the natural processes of an undisturbed forest.

The following spring we were rewarded by the singing and subsequent nesting of winter wrens, birds that had previously been only autumn migrants and occasionally winter inhabitants of the riparian habitat. It took an abundance of fallen trees to provide the upturned roots in which they build their cavity nests.

In addition to feeding stream dwellers and providing nesting habitat for winter wrens, riparian forests perform many other ecological functions, according to Chuck Williams of Clarion University. He has been studying riparian forests in the Allegheny National Forest and has found that they protect streams from sedimentation and the runoff of excess nutrients and toxins. Like us, he also discovered that riparian forests are "centers of diversity." Plants, especially, are very diverse. "Our field work on the ANF has found that riparian systems support perhaps the greatest herbaceous plant species' diversity of forests of the region," Williams said. That is because these areas contain a variety of soil types, moisture and light conditions, and are subject to frequent flooding that creates a mixture of small habitats that are able to support a wider variety of plant species in a single area. As we have found, both wetland and upland plant species live in a riparian forest.

Williams also emphasized the impor-

tance of coarse woody debris in creating plant diversity and mentioned that more mature forests produce much more coarse woody debris. In addition, riparian forests and their accompanying streams are essential to a wide range of amphibians.

"At least 15 species of salamanders are associated with riparian forests," he told us. Ornithologist Margaret Brittingham of Penn State University has studied streamside buffer zones and has discovered that the wider the buffer zone, the higher the number and variety of breeding bird species. Four hundred feet buffers produced nearly a full complement of bird species, except for the Louisiana waterthrush, which requires 700 feet. Along four herbaceous and six woody half-mile long corridors no more than 20 feet wide in Lancaster County, 71 bird species that are tolerant of human disturbance bred. In other words, birds that are already common, such as song sparrows, American robins, Canada geese, mallards, red-winged blackbirds and tree swallows, preferred to breed in more human impacted areas.

Despite the benefits of riparian forests to the natural world, few landowners understand their importance.

But Brittingham's four forested sites with a half-mile buffer zone produced an entirely different array of birds in which numbers are dwindling, in part, because they are losing undisturbed habitat — Acadian flycatchers, wood thrushes, ovenbirds, veeries, scarlet tanagers and Louisiana waterthrushes, as well as eastern towhees. Although towhees like early successional and woody corridors, they don't tolerate human disturbance, hence their surprising preference for riparian forests. With the exception of veeries, those species are most abundant in our Plummer's Hollow riparian forest.

Dr. Bernard Sweeney of the Stroud Water Research Center mentioned still more benefits of riparian forests to aquatic habitat. For instance, the large roots of trees growing along streambanks provide homes for macroinvertibrates. Those same trees also produce flowers that some aquatic insects feed on. The twigs trees shed into the stream are often used as shelter by caddisfly larvae, and dobsonflies lay their eggs on fallen logs in or above the stream.

Sadly, though, despite the benefits of riparian forest to the natural world, few landowners understand their importance. Dan Dutcher of Penn State University's School of Forest Resources has been talking to landowners about their streams. He has found little interest in taking care of riparian zones. Most landowners believe that, "If you don't keep the woods back, they'll encroach on the fields." There is an overwhelming tradition of fighting back nature and keeping their landscape neat. Mown or grazed grasses, even along streambanks, are seen as both practical and aesthetically pleasing to the human senses.

Many of these same folks enjoy fishing and watching birds and animals. Somehow we must convey Todd's message that "messy is good" and "fish (as well as birds, mammals, wildflowers, amphibians and reptiles) do grow on trees." □

The benefits of hunting on private land just can't be ignored. Here are tips for . . .

Accessing Private Property



BOWHUNTING for deer on private property allows archers to hunt with less competition from other hunters. This allows hunters to pattern the deer better, and also gives bucks more of a chance to survive a few seasons and grow large antlers.

THE EVENING AIR was just beginning to cool when the big doe showed up. The deer fed closer and closer to my stand, until it stood no more than five yards from the base of the tree I was perched in.

I picked up my bow and clipped my release to the string, but then a sudden, strong urge came over me. The message was clear: Don't shoot. I don't know where the sensation came from, but it was so strong that I obeyed.

No more than 10 minutes passed before I spied movement off to my right. Through the branches and leaves I made out a piece of antler. A buck's better than a doe any day in my book, and if I had shot at the doe, chances are I probably would have scared off the buck without ever seeing it.

Cautiously, the buck slipped out of the thicket and buried its nose in the scent trail I had put down. Meticulously, it picked its way along the trail, heading toward my stand. Every chattering from a squirrel, every flick of the tail of the doe behind me, every swaying of a branch stopped the big buck in its tracks and put it on full alert. This was no year-and-a-half-old buck. He was a big, mature, 9-point that obviously had more than a few years under his belt. It was wise in the ways of the woods, but it failed to detect my presence, and that was the last mistake it made.

I shot that buck in October 1999, but its fate was sealed back in 1994 when I secured permission to hunt the privately owned woodlot the buck called home. Although Pennsylvania is well known for its many tracts of public hunting land, approximately three-quarters of all hunting in the state takes place on private property.

Bowhunting for deer on private property allows archers to hunt with less com-

petition from other hunters. This allows hunters to pattern the deer better, but also gives bucks more of a chance to survive a few seasons and grow big trophy antlers. If you're like me, and you don't live near a lot of public hunting ground, it can also save you lots of travel time, and allow you to spend more time in the woods.

But unless you own your own hunting



GAINING ACCESS to private property for hunting can be a tricky task, but if you're kind, considerate, conscientious and persistent, you can unlock the door to the hunting property of your dreams.

ground, gaining access to private property can be challenging. In some instances you have to convince a total stranger to let you onto his or her property with a device used for killing. Put yourself in the landowners' shoes. That's a lot to ask. But it's not an impossible feat. If you're kind, considerate, conscientious and persistent, you can unlock the door to the hunting property of your dreams.

The first step toward gaining access to private property is to commit yourself to achieving this goal. Rest assured, you will encounter rejection, but you can't let that get you down. You may have to endure some insults, a few slammed doors and many polite rejections before that one person says "yes."

Once you've convinced yourself you're in this game for the long haul, start with the familiar. You know the saying "it's not what you know, it's who you know?" Well, nothing will get you further with a landowner than some point of familiarity. Do you personally know anyone who owns a piece of hunting real estate? Ask around. Maybe you do and you don't know it.

An old friend of my family owned one of the first private farms I ever hunted. I had driven by the farm many times, salivating at all the deer I'd see in the fields on summer evenings. The land was well marked with posters, so I never bothered to knock on the door to ask permission to hunt. If I had, I immediately would have recognized the farmer's wife, Betsy, who was basically raised by my aunt.

Two years passed before my aunt mentioned at a family reunion that I should go see Betsy if I wanted a place to hunt. When she told me Betsy owned the farm I drove by every day, I just about fell out of my chair. And the property turned out to be everything I had dreamed of, yielding several deer to my bow and arrows.

If you don't personally know anyone who owns huntable land, talk to your relatives and friends. Maybe they do, and will help you get a foot in the door. Keep your ears open at all times, and let it be known far and wide that you're always interested in gaining access to hunt private property. You never know when you might get a new lead.

A few years ago I gained permission to hunt a farm while attending a court hearing that I was covering as a news reporter. I was killing time in the hallway outside the courtroom during one of the recesses, talking to some of the people who had been sitting in the audience, when the conversation somehow turned to hunting.

A kind, older gentlemen mentioned that he regularly saw quite a few deer on the 200-acre farm he owned. When I asked if he would consider allowing me to hunt his land, he graciously agreed, even though we had never met before that day. Had I

approached him cold, he might not have given me permission. But because we had spent time together, albeit very little time, there was a sense of familiarity there that I'm convinced gave me the foot in the door that I needed.

If you run all of your checks, and you still can't find a place to hunt, it's time to go cold calling. This is the toughest way to access private property. And in this game, image is everything. Knock on a door in your camo clothing during the hunting season, and ask permission from a stranger to hunt on his land, and I guarantee you'll be sent on your way more often than not. The best time to go cold calling is in the spring and summer. The season is far enough away that you can give landowners time to think about giving you access to their properties before you actually hunt them. If you're looking in farm country, it's also a busy time of year for farmers. Offer a day or two of work around the farm in exchange for hunting privileges. This offer is invaluable because it allows you and the farmer to get to know each other, and it shows the farmer how much it would mean to you to hunt his land. It shows him you're someone who will treat his property with respect.

Look and act presentable when you go cold calling. Wear clean clothes and speak respectfully. Even if you get rejected, remember your manners. A landowner might change his or her mind about hunting in a couple of years. You'd be surprised how quickly farmers will allow hunting on previously unhunted land once they begin to feel the impact of the resident deer herd in their wallets. Likewise, people who live on picturesque estates will often give permission to a couple of hunters once the deer on their land start eating all their expensive shrubbery. The property where I shot the big 9-point last year is just such a place.

A friend of my mother's began complaining in 1994 about all the deer eating every new plant she stuck in her garden on her 40-acre property. This woman knew nothing about hunting, and, quite frankly, she wasn't too keen on the idea of strangers running around on her land with guns, particularly because her two grandchildren regularly visited her. My mother told the woman that I liked to hunt deer with a bow and arrow, and the woman gave me access to her land. Her only rule: no guns.

Over the years I've found that landowners are much quicker to give me hunting access if I promise to hunt only with my bow. Guns and blaze orange can be quite intimidating. Conversely, fully camouflaged, noiseless bowhunters are like ghosts. Our vehicles are the only evidence we are out there. After you've hunted a property for a couple of years, and you've forged a good relationship with a landowner, then you can broach the subject of hunting with a gun. By then, you'll be asking from a position of familiarity as opposed to being a stranger fresh off the street.

Ask your local wildlife conservation officer and municipal officials for leads on private property owners who might give you access to their land. These officials know a lot of landowners in your neck of the woods. They can probably tell you which ones have complained about deer damage, or who are generally open to allowing hunting on their land.

Once you've gained access to a piece of private property, you've got to recognize what a rare and special privilege you've been given and act accordingly. Sit down with the landowners and find out any and all concerns and wishes they have. Where do they want you to park? Are there any sections of the property they'd rather you don't hunt? How do they feel about you leaving treestands in the woods? Find out, down to the last detail, exactly how they want you to use their property, and then make sure you do nothing to lead them to question your actions.

If you encounter any trespassing hunters, or come across some dumping or other illegal activity on the property, report it immediately. You don't want to get blamed for something you didn't do, and rest as-

sured, if the farmer discovers something on his land that is amiss during hunting season, he will come to you, because you're the one he sees.

I once lost permission to hunt a farm because another hunter had apparently sneaked onto the land, fired two or three errant arrows at a deer in a field, and the farmer picked up those arrows in his machinery when he baled hay. Even though I showed the farmer my arrows to prove the ones he found were not the same color, length or weight, I became the scapegoat and was asked not to come back. The trespassing hunter who actually fired those arrows probably still hunts that farm today. I do not.

Every year, in the *Hunting & Trapping Digest*, the Game Commission reminds us that "Hunting and trapping are privileges in Pennsylvania. A license does not entitle you to trespass on private lands. Hunters and furtakers may be prosecuted for trespassing, whether or not a property is posted against hunting or trapping. Always ask permission to hunt or trap; make sure you are a welcomed guest of the landowner. A private landowner who permits hunting or trapping does not extend assurance the premises are safe, and does not assume responsibility or incur liability for injury."

Take this message to heart, and you could gain access to your private field of dreams. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Smell Me

Read the following clues to identify the wildflowers, then copy the misplaced capital letters and unscramble, if necessary, to name correctly.

I am The state floweR of MAssachusetts. I'm sometImes caLled a "mayflower," though I bloom In late wiNter to early sprinG. My whitish-pink flowerS are very tiny, BUt They have a perfUmy fRagAnce.

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— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

You can smEll me on sunny spring days, and I'm a member of the liLy family. I'm not known by my flowEr, but by my onion liKe bulb.

— — — —

— — — —

My genuS name comes from the GreeK words *symploKe* and *karpos*, meaNing "connected frUit." IndiAns used my crushed leaves to Cure heAdaches. A cough syrup was made from my Boiled roots. The root is very hot on the tonGue, so By all means never tastE it.

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answers on p. 64

Starting out with the proper firearm is essential to sustaining junior's interest in hunting.

Teaching the Young Hunter

"MY YOUNG SON doesn't want to hunt because he is afraid of recoil," the caller told me. "He shot my 12-gauge pump and it almost knocked him down. Have you any suggestions on how I can get him interested in shooting and hunting?"

To make a long story short, I asked the father to bring his son to my shooting range. Several Saturdays later, he and the boy arrived. I could understand why the youngster was apprehensive about shooting; he probably weighed less than 90 pounds.

For about a half-hour I showed the young fellow how I reloaded shells and drilled and tapped rifles. He asked questions about reloading, and said he wished his father would buy a reloading press. When he said that, I knew he had more than a passing interest in shooting. The problem would be to undo the fear of the 12-gauge pump he had firmly entrenched in his mind.

I opened the shooting window and put a .22 Hornet Savage 23D bolt action rifle on the sandbags. After getting the seat and the front rest adjusted for him, I asked him to aim the empty rifle at the 50-yard target board and pull the trigger. I assured him that the rifle was not loaded and explained that dropping the firing pin on an empty chamber in a centerfire rifle was not harmful to the firing pin. When he pulled the trigger, he actually closed his eyes. I made no comment on that, and asked him to take a little more time aiming. After five or six dry fires, he was calm and didn't flinch.

I sat at the bench and loaded the rifle with a live round. While I aimed, he pulled the trigger. I could see he was relieved when there was no deafening noise or backward bounce from the rifle. For the next shot, I had him place his left hand between the butt pad and my shoulder while he pulled the trigger. This convinced him there really was nothing to fear. Minutes later, he fired a live round, and the smile on his face told me the battle was nearly won.

After a short question and answer session, I had him fire several rounds from a .22-250 varmint rig, to get him accustomed to the higher noise level. Next, he looked a bit leery when I placed Helen's .25-06 deer rifle on the bench, but I assured him there was nothing to fear. Three shots later, he proudly explained to his father that two shots were in the 4-inch bullseye.

As they prepared to leave, I emphasized to both of them the need for safety training that is available today in HTE classes, which are taught by trained instructors. I also pointed out three main safety rules: Treat every firearm as if it were loaded; watch where the muzzle is pointed; and



NEW ENGLAND FIREARMS' Youth Turkey model is an ideal single-shot shotgun for the beginning young hunter.

always be aware of what's behind the target.

It was a satisfying experience for me because I knew the hunting/shooting population had been increased by one. It was unfortunate that the youngster's first introduction to shooting was via the powerful recoil of a 12-gauge shotgun. However, with a softer approach, the young boy overcame his fear of recoil. He's more knowledgeable about the backward thrust of a hunting rifle or shotgun, and he is better able to handle it. All it took was a couple of hours of training to overcome what could have been a lifetime of fear.

Having been involved with hunting firearms for decades, I've learned every one of us has an inherent fear of recoil. Actually, I believe it's not so much the recoil that makes us leery of shooting; it's the loud muzzle blast. This is why it's imperative to always wear ear protectors, even when shooting a .22 rimfire cartridge. Ear protectors do two things: They reduce the noise level the shooter hears, and they reduce damage to the ears. I mentioned the .22 rimfire deliberately, because it has a higher decibel output than most shooters realize.

Hearing experts generally agree that decibels more than 100 can be harmful to the ears. I discovered that the .22 rimfire produces peak sound pressure levels of 145. A .44 Magnum handgun cartridge has a decibel level of 170. A 12-gauge shotgun produces 155. This proves that wearing ear protectors is necessary when shooting any firearm. The reason I'm putting so much emphasis on ear protectors is simply to prevent excessive hearing loss like I've suffered due to lack of knowledge and carelessness. My hearing loss probably started in the military, when we lined up and shot without any type of hearing protectors at all. After opening a gun shop, I fired for several years without taking any precautions. Consequently, I've lost most of my hearing. Still, I wear ear protectors when shooting or hunting, to preserve what little hearing I have.

One of the worst things to do is start a young shooter out with an expensive outfit. For the most part, a conventional size rifle or shotgun (even a double barrel) will probably be too long. New England Firearms offers an ideal shotgun for a small framed or young hunter. It's a single-shot with a cut down stock. It's reasonably priced, and a single-shot is the safest action for new hunters. If an adult size gun is purchased, it will probably need to be cut down, which will only decrease its value when it comes time to trade or sell when upgrading. Also, cutting down a conventional shotgun stock is not as good as a factory shotgun designed specifically for young hunters.

I know it has been a long-standing tradition to start young or new hunters with a .410. By the way, the .410 is not a gauge; it's the actual bore diameter in thousandths of an inch (.410 thousandths). I know, with all the nostalgia that goes with the .410, that this will raise the ire of many .410 fans, but it's the worst gauge for a new hunter. It has similar velocities of the larger gauges, but the shotshell payload is not sufficient to produce dense patterns. It literally requires centering the target in the load, and this requires a lot of shooting experience with the tiny shell.

A 3-inch .410 shell usually has less than 3/4 ounces of shot. With number 6 shot, this comes out to 169 pellets (only 113 in a half-ounce load). A 1-ounce load in the 2 3/4-inch 20-gauge shell holds 225 number 6 shot, and a 20-gauge case can easily hold a 1 1/8-ounce load, which increases the pel-

let count to 253. The 1-ounce load has 56 more pellets, and the 1¼-ounce load offers 84 extra pellets. It should be obvious why the .410 bore is not for beginners. Veteran .410 users experience success, but a beginner can't be expected to shoot on the same level as a veteran.

Although hunting guns make ideal Christmas and birthday presents, it's best if the new hunter gets the firearm long before opening day. The first step is to teach the young hunter the nomenclature of the firearm. If it's a shotgun, follow the instructions for field stripping. For instance, a single-barrel shotgun breaks down to three pieces — the stock, barrel and forearm. Pumps and autoloaders are a bit more complex, but the new hunter should know how to disassemble and assemble the new outfit. The rifle need not be completely disassembled, but the youngster should know how to remove the bolt, how the safety works and when it's ready to fire. Youngsters should be taught to remove the live case from the chamber before removing the detachable (clip) magazine or releasing live rounds from the magazine tube.

I can sum up everything else in a single word — youngsters should practice at sheets of newspaper for patterning purposes, or firing 3-shot 50-yard groups with a rifle. A trip or two to a trap range, or shooting a round of sporting clays will do wonders for young hunters. Don't expect miracles; a friend who considers himself a good small game hunter broke 16 birds out of 50 on his first try at sporting clays. If a young shooter breaks only two or three, it's worthy of a hearty handshake and a congratulatory slap on the back. There's a psychological side to shooting, too.

The best advice is to allow a new or young shooter to develop over a long period of time. If a young person is being introduced to shooting, use a .22 rimfire to break large targets, such as balloons tied to the target board. A hanging block of wood about three inches square in front of a safe backstop will swing wildly when hit. The crack of a bursting balloon or the dancing of a hanging block of wood when hit makes a vivid impression on a new shooter. To help ensure a hit, place the targets about 30 yards from the shooter.



IT'S up to adults to give youngsters proper training in firearms handling, and to pass on the hunting heritage.

Various homemade shooting games can be used, and as the new shooter progresses, the targets can become smaller and the range increased. During all the shooting sessions, stress safety and put a lot of emphasis on identifying the target. Drill into the new hunter's mind that it's imperative to be certain the target is legal and that it's safe to shoot. Don't hunt in safety zones or anywhere that might cause danger to not only human beings, but livestock or other domestic animals.

Finally, teach sportsmanship. Teach the youngster that shooting and hunting demand a high degree of responsibility. Teach the youngster to be a quality hunter not a quantity hunter. Conserve game and don't take shots that might only wound an animal. Respect the rights of others, and always get permission to hunt. Stress that once the trigger is pulled, it's impossible to call back the shot. That's worth remembering. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

The spring turkey season in Ohio will for the first time be open statewide, except on designated youth hunting areas, from April 24 through May 14, 2000. Last spring in Ohio, hunters killed a record 14,419 birds — the 22nd consecutive year for a record turkey harvest. Eleven hunters were injured in nine separate turkey hunting incidents last spring.

Turkey hunters in Arkansas took 15,155 gobblers last spring — an increase of 15 percent from the prior year.

An estimated 2,492 turkeys were taken in New Jersey during the 1999 spring season — up from 2,420 taken in 1998.

Hunters in Missouri set a new harvest record during the 1999 spring turkey season, bagging 50,338 birds. One third of the harvest consisted of jakes. Eleven hunters were injured in turkey hunting incidents. Two of the injuries were self-inflicted; nine injuries were caused by hunters mistaking other hunters for turkeys.

Hunters in Massachusetts took a record 2,363 turkeys during the 1999 spring season. The record harvest was partly due to a recently enacted 2-bird limit.

Hunters in New York reported taking 8,973 turkeys during the 1999 spring season — down from the 9,189 reported in 1998. The record spring gobbler harvest occurred in 1996 when 10,341 birds were reported taken.

Turkey hunters in Wisconsin took 33,142 birds during the 1999 spring gobbler season — a success rate of 30 percent.

It was another record-breaking spring turkey season for New Hampshire in 1999, as hunters took 1,380 bearded birds — up from 1,016 taken in 1998. Wild turkeys were restored to New Hampshire in 1975. Now, there are 10,000 to 12,000 turkeys throughout the state, and the entire state is open for spring turkey hunting.

There were a reported 2,651 turkeys taken in Maryland during the 1999 spring season — up from 2,589 in 1998. Garrett County in the northwest had the highest harvest, with 511 birds.

Hunters took 11,175 turkeys in West Virginia during the 1999 spring season — down 10 percent from the 12,467 in 1998. Preston County was tops with 430 birds taken.

Turkey hunters in Iowa took a record 17,360 birds during the 1999 spring season — up nearly 10 percent from the previous record set in 1998. About 45 percent of the turkey hunters bagged a bird.

There were 6,548 turkeys reported taken in Indiana during the 1999 spring gobbler season.

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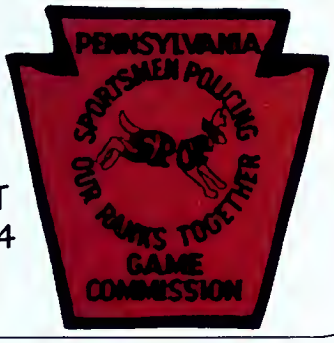






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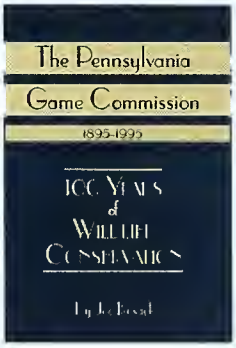
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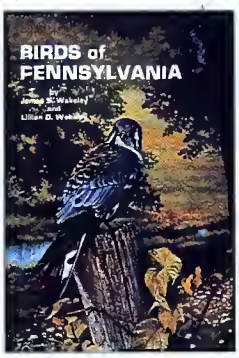
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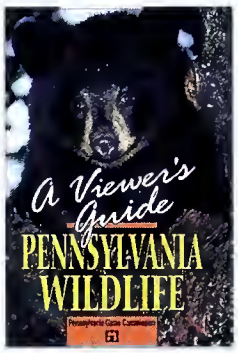
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Volume 71 ● No. 5

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.

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editorial

Spring Safety

THE MOST EXCITING SOUND of spring for a quarter million or so men and women in Pennsylvania is the thundering gobble of a love-struck wild turkey. Since a spring gobbler season was first offered here in 1968, interest in the sport and opportunities to find the wary birds have mushroomed. In the March and April issues, Bob Frye and Shirley Grenoble covered, respectively, the history of Pennsylvania's turkey restoration program and how spring turkey hunting techniques have evolved over the years.

Another aspect of turkey hunting warrants a look, too: accidents, or incidents, as they're now called. As turkeys became more common throughout the state and hunting them so popular, so, too, did the number of instances in which hunters were shooting one another, most often in mistake for game.

This reached staggering levels in 1990, when there were 46 turkey hunting related incidents (spring and fall), and 1991, when there were 53. Since then, due to heightened awareness among turkey hunters, extensive educational campaigns, and the turkey hunting fluorescent orange regulations, which took effect in the fall of 1992, turkey hunting has become much safer. In recent years, turkey hunting incidents have averaged around a dozen or so, with a particular drop in the number of people shot in mistake for game. There seems to be, however, an increase in the number of people shot while in the line of fire. Following are basic turkey hunting safety tips that will help make this spring season as safe as possible:

- Positively identify your target. If every hunter would identify his target as a legal, *bearded* gobbler, most incidents would be eliminated.
- Do not wear any red, white or blue clothing, as these colors are found on wild turkeys.
- Set up against a tree large enough to protect your back.
- Preselect a zone of fire.
- When using a decoy, position it so that you're least likely to be in a line of fire from any approaching hunters, and when carrying a decoy, put it in a vest or bag so it isn't visible.
- Don't move, stand or wave to alert an approaching hunter, even one you know. Instead, shout "Stop."
- Do not stalk turkey sounds, as they very well could be those of another hunter, or stalk an actual bird, as that's nearly impossible to do.
- Wear fluorescent orange. The law requires that hunters wear at least 100 square inches (a hat) of the safety color while moving. Although it's not required, hunters are encouraged to wear or display fluorescent orange, the more the better, while set up at a calling location.

Have a wonderful season this spring, make it a safe one, and by all means, positively identify your target.

For more on turkey hunting safety and turkey hunting in general, visit the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation at www.go2pa.com/panwtf, and the National Wild Turkey Federation at www.nwtf.org. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

A subscriber for more than 50 years, I still look forward to every issue. I recently came upon a canceled check from 1953, in the amount of $2.50, the cost of a 3-year subscription.

R. Pletcher,
Fairview

Editor:

I would like to thank Joe Parry for "Something About a Gun," in the February issue. It reminded me of my uncles who taught me to hunt, my grandfather who I never had the chance to hunt with, and all the friends I've made in 37 years of hunting.

G. Gonsar,
Burnham

Editor:

I've been hunting Penn's Woods for four years now and have had many exciting times. The friends I go with make every year a good time, for all the laughs we share.

This past year stood out for several reasons. I bagged a beautiful pheasant on opening day, and when buck season arrived, I hunted a new spot. The gamble paid off and I got a nice 8-point on the opening day of rifle season. The thrill I experienced last year was amazing, and I'm looking forward to many more hunts to come in Pennsylvania.

M McKeough,
Conshokocken

Editor:

What a treat to read Connie Mertz's "Becoming a Hunter," in which she serves as an instructor, mentor and hunting buddy. Most times sporting women are portrayed as pupils or novices. As a 40-year hunter, I know there are hundreds of other moms like me who have played a major role in teaching their children and friends to become safe, competent hunters.

J. Cavanaugh,
Gillett

Editor:

Every week our class goes to our school library. There's a big rack of *Game News*, dating from 1985. With so many to choose from, my friend and I pick out the issues with the best covers.

J. Blough,
Altoona

Editor:

I always thought we did have a quality deer management program. Although antlers look nice on the wall, they don't put meat on the table or control the deer population.

K. Bloom,
Spring Run

Editor:

In the February issue were plans for building a wren house out of a flowerpot. What can I use to cut the 2 x 7/8-inch opening?

D. Minsterman,
Connellsville

The best way is to place the flowerpot upside down between your knees, and using a sharp nail and a hammer, tap gently at an angle, gradually chipping out a hole. After the hole is formed smooth the edges with a rattail file. Another way is to drill it out using a masonry bit.

Editor:

In the March "Behind the Badge" column, mention was made of a "time of death kit" officers use to determine how long an animal has been dead. What is it comprised of?

K. Boris,
Corning, NY

Bob D'Angelo covered this in our December 1996 issue. Briefly, a time of death kit consists of thermometers, measuring devices, and an electrostimulus testing apparatus, all of which is part of a forensics kit officers use to investigate certain violations.

Editor:

I really enjoyed the feature by Karen Lippy in the February issue. It shows not only how seeking out true answers to tough questions can change anti-hunting sentiments, but also how the behavior of hunters is so important in determining how nonhunters view our sport.

Karen's story reflects the excellent quality and diversity of information found in *Game News*.

F. Resides,
West Chester

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Mid-Morning Longbeard

By Nick Erway

I NEVER HAD time to hunt spring gobblers much. There was always too much to do, such as planting grass and pulling weeds. I never could justify it, and although I tried spring turkey hunting, I never got serious about it. As I sat there in the cool, spring woods, thinking of all the things I should be doing, I decided that this year was going to be different.

Recently retired from a 29-year career that involved a lot of traveling, I now have time to hunt. I got the yard in shape and everything done. This was going to be the year I'd get my gobbler. An acquaintance who had been hearing turkeys gave me permission to hunt near her home and park in her driveway. I didn't get out until Monday of the second week, but I knew I had lots of time.

On that day I was up early, ate breakfast, gathered up all my stuff and was off to my new spot, three miles from my home in Perry County. It was a beautiful cool day. I headed up the trail through mountain laurel and some mixed hemlocks and hardwoods, then picked out what seemed like a good place to start calling.

The hardest thing for me is to refrain from calling too often. Timing myself with my watch, every 15 minutes I gave another series of calls, softly at first and then a little louder. Using every one of my calls and getting no results, I started to think about things I should have been doing at home. Going for nearly five hours without hearing a gobble, I was just about to quit when I heard a turkey gobble far off. For the next hour, I called every 15 minutes and heard the gobbler only two more times, but he sounded farther away each time.

Time was running out, so I decided the next day I would get a little closer to where I heard him. I quietly moved down off the hill and was about to get in my car when I noticed that my friend, Amy, was home. I started up the steps to her home when I heard another gobble. This time it was close. My watch showed that it was 10 minutes to noon. Amy came out and the turkey gobbled again, barely off the edge of her yard.

"I'll show you that turkey," she said.

I stowed my gun in the car, then we took a small trail out of her backyard and down through a small woodlot that opened into a freshly plowed field. There he was, about 300 yards away, right in the middle of the field. He saw us and took off running for the other side. He really looked big.

On Tuesday I got up early again, grabbed a bite to eat and some coffee, then headed out. I went right to the edge of the big field. I quietly walked in and found a log to sit on. The log lies in front of its trunk and is a perfect seat with a backrest. I started calling softly every 15 minutes. I didn't hear a thing for three hours, but I sat there anyway. It was a nice morning, and I knew that the gobbler was around. If I sat long enough, I was sure I'd hear him.


Scott
Calpine



At 10 o'clock, out of the corner of my eye I caught something heading my way. I didn't dare blink — even though I had a facemask on. A hen moved behind me and began clucking, then immediately the tom gobbled from across the field. I never heard him or the hen again, so I figured they got together and ambled off.

Wednesday morning found me again on the log, and again I went for three hours without hearing a turkey. At 10 o'clock, though, right on schedule, the tom gobbled. He stepped out into the far side of the plowed field, about 125 yards away. He walked my way then flopped down and started dusting himself. I tried a couple purrs and yelps, but he paid no attention. The bird got up and shook, sending a cloud of dust across the field on the slight breeze. He turned and walked the other way, disappearing into the woods.

On Friday I set up on the other side of the field, in a grove of pine trees. I heard a tractor in the distance, and before long a farmer began planting corn in the field 100 feet across from me. I knew the bird wouldn't go into the field with all the racket going on, so I relocated to the log where I had been sitting during the first few days of the season. I no longer heard the tractor, and darned if the tom didn't start gobbling from near the spot I had just left. Then I heard what I thought was another hunter calling to the tom on his side of the field, but soon realized it was a real hen.

On Saturday I figured there was no reason to get into the woods before 9 o'clock, because on previous hunts he hadn't gobbled until around 10, so I slept in. At 10 o'clock I spotted the tom across the field. I made a couple calls, but he ran into the woods. Not long after that two hens worked their way up along the edge of the field towards me, picking up some newly planted corn along the way. All of a sudden the big gobbler jumped into the field. He was being chased by a big, black housecat. They did a couple circles around each other and stopped and stared at each other before the cat apparently decided this turkey was too big for him and casually sauntered across the field and disappeared. The tom disappeared back into the woods. The two hens continued my way and kept feeding right past me and into the big woods beyond. When they were within 20 feet of me, I could see that one had a 2-inch beard. It was a legal bird, but I wanted the big gobbler.

The following Monday was a nice, clear day. I decided to find a spot in a smaller field above the big field I had been setting up near. I felt that the big gobbler must have been crossing this field to get to the

other. I found a big pine tree that gave me a good view of the upper corner of the field, but after about an hour and a half I decided to look for another spot.

I ended up on my familiar log where I had set up during the previous week and soon noticed the two hens coming my way. I waited and watched as they came right past me, then I heard a loud gobble. The tom was in the smaller field I had just left. I clucked, just like the hens had done during the previous week, and the gobbler came running, straight at me. *Boom*! I missed, and the bird hightailed it back the way he had come.



I couldn't believe I had missed. I never saw him until he came over the top of the slope, and he was no more than 40 feet away, coming at a dead run. He closed the distance so fast he couldn't have been more than 15 feet away when I shot. I figured my shot pattern was so small at that distance that missing wasn't hard to do.

I went out the next two days and spotted the gobbler both times, but he was quiet and wouldn't respond to any calling. On the following Saturday I was in the woods by 7 o'clock. I thought other hunters might be about, and I wanted to be situated in case someone interrupted the big gobbler's routine. Around 8:30 I saw movement behind me in the field then heard some yelping. What I thought was a turkey turned out to be a hunter dressed completely in camouflage walking toward me. The hunter never noticed my orange hat and walked right on past then sat down in the trail between the two fields. He stayed for about 20 minutes then got up and left. I moved quietly up to the smaller field and sat until 11 o'clock, then was returning to my original spot when I spotted the gobbler dusting in the big field again, not 50 feet from where I had been earlier. He saw me and spooked.

On the following Wednesday I set up in a small hedgerow near the big field, and at 10 o'clock the big tom stepped into view. He was 50 feet away and heading right for me. I put the bead of the Ithaca 37 just above his beard, where the neck met his body, and pulled the trigger. The bird crumpled at the shot, and just like that, I had him. My persistence paid off. I quit shaking from the excitement, filled out my tag, then examined my first gobbler. He was a real beauty. He had a 10-inch beard and weighed 18 pounds.

What a privilege it is to spend time in the spring woods turkey hunting. I guess I was wrong; there really aren't better things to do in the spring. □

Cover Painting by Joe Mattock

THE CHANCE of seeing and hearing a big boss gobbler — like the one depicted on this month's cover — just off the roost and amidst a carpet of mayapple on a cool spring morning is all the incentive needed for a diehard turkey hunter to get up in the wee hours of the morning day after day and get into the woods. The colors, sounds and smells of a forest anew this month makes the spring gobbler season a special time to be out and about. Remember to keep everything in perspective, though, and be extremely conscious of safety when out hunting.


CROCKETT
1986 – 1999
M. GIRIO BRUMMETT

A Little Time

By Dave Dufford

AS HUNTING DOGS go, Crockett was the exception, and I was well aware of just how good he was. A mixed breed that few would have considered trying to hunt with, he proved to be as proficient at finding game as any dog I had ever hunted with. With the hours we spent hunting together each season, and the time we put in the rest of the year, it's no exaggeration to say that Crockett was my best friend.

When Crockett died early last spring, the whole family took it hard. I was so disheartened that I almost gave up on keeping another dog around at all. When Crockett died, I also had a pair of young English springer spaniels and their litter of eight pups, and when the pups went up for sale, I also placed their parents up for sale. The male was sold before my wife convinced me that I wouldn't know what to do without a dog around the place.

I recalled a time while pheasant hunting with Crockett that I wondered what I would ever do without him. With the question itself alluding to his mortality, I consoled myself with the fact that he was still in his prime, that we had many years of hunting ahead of us. Nonetheless, thoughts about his mortality resurfaced every so often, and I began to contemplate the idea of getting another dog. Three more years would pass before I decided about the breed I wanted, and it was more than a year after that before I finally got one.

Choosing a breed wasn't easy. I had never owned a pointing dog, and the whole idea of training and working with one didn't appeal to me. On the other hand, I couldn't argue with the success I was having with Crockett. His flushing style worked so well in the thick and swampy covers where I hunt, and it occurred to me that a pointing dog might not be as effective in this type of cover. After a considerable amount of reading, I began to suspect that an English springer spaniel, often referred to as "the dog that does it all," might be just what I was looking for.

She arrived on Thanksgiving day. My daughter took one look at the soft liver and white little lady and immediately declared that she be named Annie. I'm not usually quick to name a pup, but in this case the name seemed to be perfect.

Annie impressed me with her intelligence right from the start, picking up on basic commands at first, and then later when I began working her on birds. Annie was too young for any serious hunting until the following October, and only two weeks before the season opened I obtained a young male springer. Just three months older than Annie, Sam was still a pup when I had done a little hunting with him. I'd liked what I'd seen, so when I had a chance to get him, I was delighted.

By the end of that season, the young pair wasn't hunting as well as Crockett, but it was clear that it was due only to their lack of experience. It wasn't until Crockett's third birthday before I was ready to call him a hunting dog. Annie and Sam were only half that age, but they were both hunting better than he had at that age.

It was my son who first suggested that I raise a litter of pups, and by then I was sure the two springers would pro-

duce good hunters. I was thrilled when the litter arrived and all the pups were fat and healthy. The joy was cut short, however, when Crockett unexpectedly died.

I still sometimes regret selling Sam so soon after Crockett died, but I'm thankful my wife persuaded me to keep Annie and one of the pups, a female we named Trace. Once I realized it would be a mistake for me to go without a dog, I understood how lucky I was to have two young dogs to work with. They kept me busy and my mind off Crockett.

After all the pups but Trace were sold, I had enough time to devote to training my two springers. By that time, most of Annie's work was little more than some refresher courses to keep her sharp. With Trace it was a lot of trial and error. I'd let her get the hang of one thing, then I'd try her at something else. Sometimes it was clear from the start that she wasn't ready to learn a particular task, but I was impressed at what she mastered at only five-and-a-half months.

Living near state game lands, I was able to get both dogs into some pheasants by mid-September. It didn't take Trace long to show me that she had enough interest in them to chase up a few. And with Annie approaching her second hunting season, it was obvious that the extra year of maturity had worked wonders for her. She was still every bit as enthusiastic about the scent of a bird, but now she was able to control that excitement and settle down to work at finding and flushing it.

I enjoy watching a springer pup when it discovers the scent of game, the way it bounces around as if the surest way to flush a bird is to simply be everywhere at once. As much as I enjoy seeing that, I find it equally rewarding to watch that pup develop into a dog that can settle into scent as soon as they pick it up and go straight to work.

Our preseason trips also taught me that hunting Annie and Trace together wasn't the best way to train either of them. Still far too playful, Trace focused her attention on pursuing her mother, which was causing Annie to range far too wide, to avoid being chased. A trip or two together was sufficient for Annie to show her pup what it was that we were after, and once that was accomplished, the training, and later the hunting, went better when I alternated them on each trip out.

When pheasant season opened, Trace's first couple of trips failed to produce a single flush, but she later got into some birds, and it proved to be just what she needed.

One day we were hunting close to a lake when she cornered a pheasant along the water's edge. I'd seen her catch its scent a minute or so earlier, and she began dancing through the cover, working toward the water. The pheasant held tight and Trace was almost on it before the cockbird flushed, and she was airborne right behind it. My shot sent plenty of feathers drifting through the air above the water, but the rooster kept on going, and landed on a long, narrow peninsula that cut into the lake more than 100 yards away.

I hoped Trace was up to finding the cripple, and as we headed off to look for it, I got upset with myself. Trace had done her part, but I failed to do mine. As we approached the spot where I'd marked the bird down, the pup found it right away, and it still had plenty of life in it. Trace ran it down and made a nice retrieve. Before sliding the ringneck into my vest I made darn sure Trace understood how pleased I was with what she'd just done.

It wasn't long until she flushed another rooster, in some thick cover bordering a small stream, and this time my shot knocked the bird down. A few moments later, though, Trace hadn't made the retrieve, so I dove into the briers myself to see what was happening. The two of us

searched the area for 20 minutes until I finally found one small feather on the root of a tree, right where it grew out from the top edge of the stream bank. While I stood there the pup came splashing across the stream, apparently to see what I had found. From where I stood at the top of the bank there was a drop of perhaps 18 inches to the water, and as the pup came close I noticed her nosing around by the tree roots. It wasn't until she had remained stationary for a few moments, with her nose almost touching the water, that I realized she was trying to tell me something. I then noticed the tips of just two wing feathers barely breaking the water surface. I'll never know if the rooster crawled under the overhanging before it died or if the current washed it there.

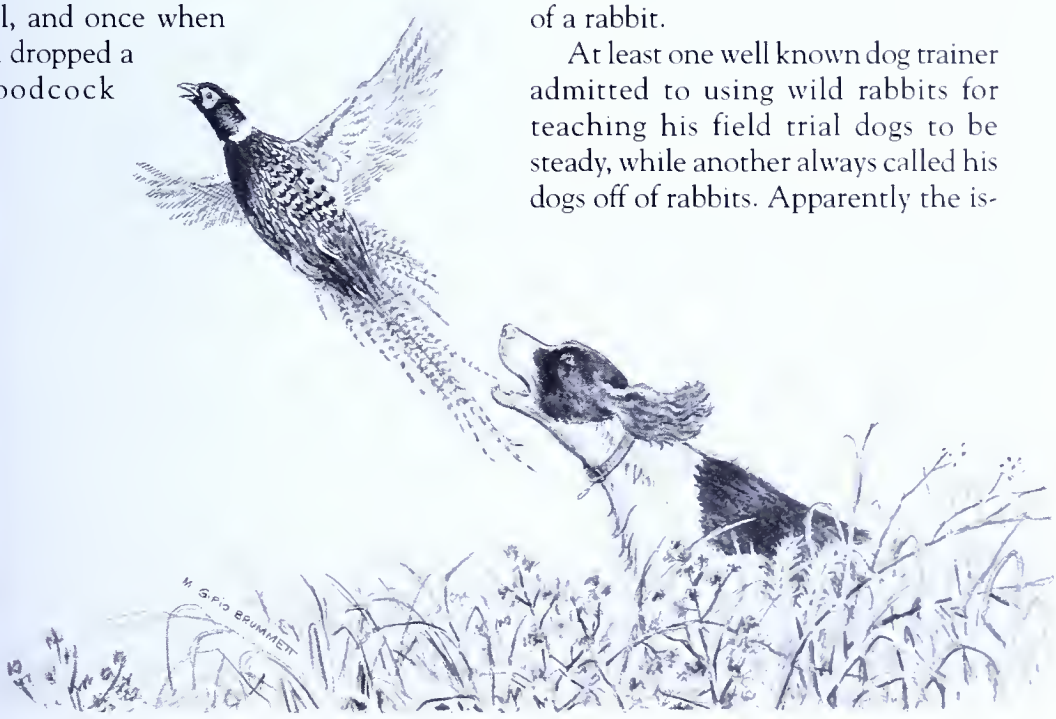
Annie and Trace put up and retrieved more birds during the season. Besides pheasants, they flushed some woodcock, and I was happy that Trace shared her mother's interest in flushing them, because her father consistently ignored timberdoodles. I've heard that some dogs will refuse to retrieve a woodcock, and Sam had been one of them. Ordinarily Sam was anxious to retrieve any bird he saw fall, and once when I'd dropped a woodcock that Annie had flushed, Sam picked it up and promptly spit it right back out.

One day during the last week in November it was Annie's turn to hunt, and we started in some tall pines covering an old strip mine. About 20 minutes into our hunt I decided to kick around at a spot I thought was likely to produce a rabbit.

Since I started working and hunting with Annie, I've been surprised by the number of hunters who don't realize that springers are often used to hunt game other than birds. Traditionally, both here and in England, springers have been used for rabbit hunting, and I've also heard of them being used for squirrel hunting.

After I brought Annie home, while she was still a pup, I went to the local library and eventually read every book I could find on training English springers. What I found was that opinions vary on whether or not springers should be used for rabbit hunting, although among professional trainers it's common knowledge that springers are greatly excited by the scent and sight of a rabbit.

At least one well known dog trainer admitted to using wild rabbits for teaching his field trial dogs to be steady, while another always called his dogs off of rabbits. Apparently the is-



sue is a matter of personal choice. I've had no problem allowing my springers to hunt rabbits. I believe the dogs have actually benefited from the experience, and although I usually concentrate on finding birds, I can't resist taking a shot at a rabbit, because they're so good as tablefare.

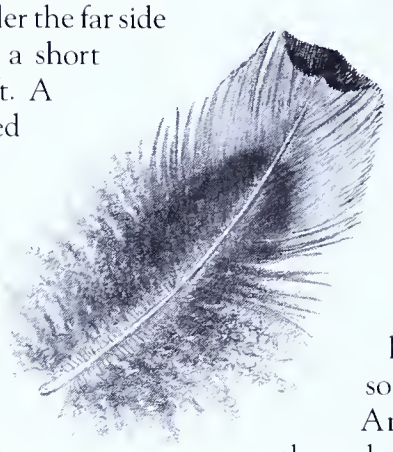
As we approached a spot where two pine trees had recently blown down, I could see Annie's growing excitement. A rabbit bolted from under the far side of the pines and made a short hook around to my left. A shot from my open choked 12-gauge rolled it.

After loading the rabbit into my vest, I hunted back through the pines until we came to some hardwoods bordering a field. Just inside the woods is a broad, thick tangle of grapevines. We were still approaching the corner when Annie's nose quickened her pace toward the end of the tangle. A grouse came up; swinging to my left, I promptly missed.

Soon after, we hunted our way down through a large stand of crabapples, zigzagging through a thicket. Having hunted here for many years, I know this spot usually produces a grouse flush or two, but because the crabapples are so high and thick, it's hard to get a shot.

Annie went to work as soon as we entered the crabapples. She quartered naturally, working one side then the other, and as we neared the wide stretch she gave me plenty of notice that game was nearby. I could hear her working beneath the trees to my left when a grouse flushed, probably not more than 10 feet ahead of her, and beat its way across a narrow opening. By the time I shot, the grouse was already out of sight. I thought I'd missed, but I hadn't. I heard wings flapping as Annie gathered up the bird.

At that point I might have been content to call it a day, but we hadn't been out long and there was plenty of daylight left. I did a lot of thinking while we hunted towards home. There isn't a single bit of cover or bend in the trail within walking distance of my home that doesn't bring back some memory of Crockett, and I caught myself looking around expecting to see him at any time. It wasn't that he was the best, but he was better than most dogs I've hunted with. He left some big shoes for a pair of little springers to fill. I have a feeling, though, that someday they will.



Annie and I worked up through a shallow hollow choked with grapevines, and from there I planned to cross a road to circle around the far side of a large hill, where we would eventually end up back near the house. Coming up near the head of the hollow I noticed her acting birdy, and when she put this grouse up it flew straight away. At the shot the grouse tumbled into a patch of cover so thick I felt thankful I had a dog that was anxious to dive in to make the retrieve. I had already come around to the dirt road by the time Annie made her way back out and brought the bird to hand. It had been a perfect afternoon, so I decided to call it a day.

As I loaded the grouse into my vest I saw a beautiful young springer in front of me, a couple of feathers still clinging to her mouth that seemed to be smiling. I see some of Annie in her pup from time to time, and I have lots of hope that Trace will come along without a problem. I'm sure I'm still going to miss Crockett for a long time, but I suspect that I may be in for some interesting hunts. □

Graduation Day

Photos by Bob D'Angelo
Game News Associate Editor



The Pennsylvania Game Commission held graduation ceremonies for its 25th Class of wildlife conservation officer trainees on Saturday, March 4, 2000, at Middletown High School.

Members of the class reported to the Ross Leffler School of Conservation training facility at the commission's Harrisburg headquarters on June 1, 1999. The 9-month training program included intensive classroom instruction and field training in wildlife management, law enforcement, wildlife laws and regulations, land management practices, conservation education, public relations, firearms and unarmed self-defense. As new district WCOs, they are responsible to administer a wide variety of commission programs within their districts. There are 135 WCO districts throughout the state.

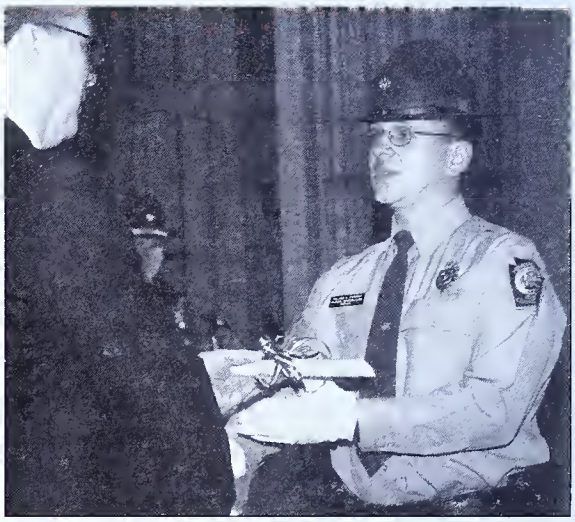
Members of the 25th Class, their hometowns and their new assignments are: Harold L. Cole Jr. of Columbia Cross Roads, Bradford County, to Southeast Region Office, Reading, Berks County; Randy R. Crago of Meadville, Crawford County, to Northwest Region Office, Franklin, Venango County; Darren J. David of Hazleton, Luzerne County, to Delaware County; William F. Dingman III of Doylestown, Bucks County, to southern Bucks County; Robert A. Einodshofer, Huntingdon, Huntingdon County, to southern Huntingdon County; Mark S. Fair of Red Lion, York County, to southern Dauphin County; Gary M. Fujak of Brentwood, Allegheny County, to western Allegheny County; Matthew M. Grebeck of Huntington Mills, Luzerne County, to Northeast Region Office, Dallas, Luzerne County; Stephen Timothy Hanczar of White Haven, Luzerne County, to northern Bucks County; Harold J. Malehorn of Dauphin, Dauphin County, to Southeast Region Office; Rodney P. Mee of Abbottstown, York County, to southern York County; Denise H. Mitcheltree of Renovo, Clinton County, to southern Potter County; Mario L. Piccirilli of Franklin, Venango County, to Northwest Region Office; Victor E. Rosa IV of Fleetville, Lackawanna County, to Northeast Region Office; Mark S. Rutkowski of Old Forge, Lackawanna County, to southern Monroe County; Eric L. Seth of Clarion, Clarion County, to northern Centre County; Gerald L. Smith of Sayre, Bradford County, to Snyder County; Wesley N. Stauffer of Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, to Cameron County; Dustin M. Stoner of Brookville, Jefferson County, to northern Forest/southern Warren counties; Peter F. Sussenbach of Blakeslee, Monroe County, to northern Monroe County; William M. Williams of Forty Fort, Luzerne County, to eastern Perry County; Brian E. Witherite of Latrobe, Westmoreland County, to eastern Greene County; and Jonathan M. Wyant of Montoursville, Lycoming County, to eastern Lycoming County.



STATE POLICE trooper William P. Kephart III opened the graduation ceremony of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation's 25th Class.



PGC Deputy Executive Director Mike Schmit hands out diplomas to the 25th Class.





WCO GRADUATE Matthew M. Grebeck receives from Deputy Executive Director Howard Harshaw the fitness award for maintaining the highest standard of physical fitness during the 40-week training period.

Marty Gitner



"WITHOUT the encouragement and support of family members, we would not be here today. This graduation ceremony is as much for you as it is for us." — *William M. Williams, Spokesperson, 25th Class*

"AS THE chief law enforcement officer of Pennsylvania, I believe that protecting our wildlife and natural resources is one of our most important duties. You are about to embark on one of the greatest and proudest professions. The God given bounty of Penn's Woods is some of the most beautiful land in the country. Let us always protect and preserve its richness," said Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher, who delivered the graduation's keynote address.





DISTRICT JUSTICE Earl H. Matz Jr. from Tremont gave the oath of office to the 25th Class.



STATE POLICE Sergeant Kevin Pierce sang the National Anthem at graduation.

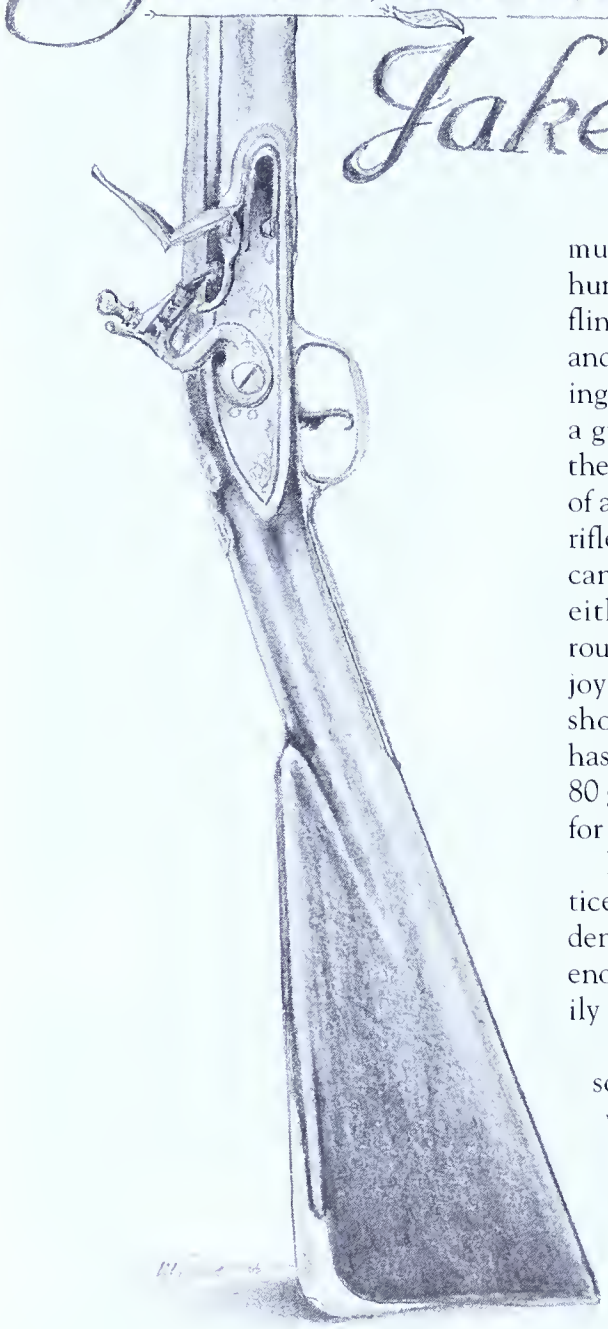


A WREATH dedication and tribute was held at the graduation ceremony for Clarion County WCO Dave Beinhaur, who passed away in December 1999.



PGC NORTHEAST REGION Color Guard retires the colors at the close of the graduation ceremony.

Smoothbore Jake



By Phil Smile

HAVING BEEN a hunter for more than 30 years and a bit of a nostalgia buff interested in the firearms our forefathers used, I eventually gravitated towards using flintlocks. I had taken several deer with a 50-caliber Hawken during past muzzleloader seasons, and to get more out of the sport, I researched black powder firearms that could be used for other game.

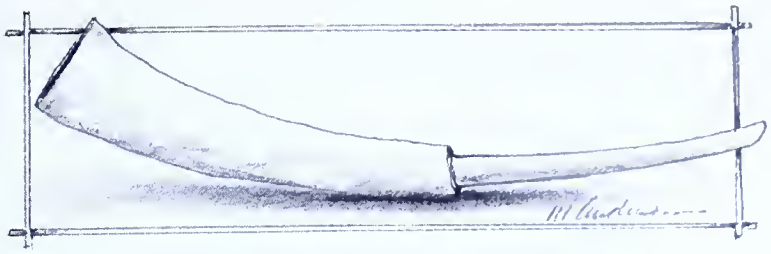
The Internet is a tremendous help in gathering information, and I eventually found a chat room, a group of individuals who discuss muzzleloaders, reenacting and primitive hunting. I learned that the smoothbore flintlock could suit my needs for both small and big game in Pennsylvania. After doing some additional research, I decided on a gunmaker from Walnut, Mississippi, by the name of Jackie Brown, and his version of an early 1750 style Virginia smoothbore rifle in 20-gauge. This particular firearm can be loaded with either shot or a roundball and is a joy to behold and shoot. As this firearm has no choke, a load of number 6 shot and 80 grains of black powder is just the ticket for turkeys at close range.

Having patterned my flintlock and practiced on a turkey silhouette, I felt confident that if I could call a gobbler in close enough, and if the firearm went off, my family would enjoy smoked wild turkey.

The opening day of spring gobbler season came, and I met my neighbor, Drew, well before dawn. We called in some hens, but it seemed there were too many hunters in the area where we were hunting, so we quit early and figured on hitting it another day.

Later that morning Drew's friend, Nathaniel, stopped by with a gobbler he had bagged, and I asked for a wing to make a wingbone turkey call. I plucked, cleaned and boiled the bones on my propane camp stove. Eventually, the ends of two of the large bones were snipped and the marrow pushed out. After more boiling of the bones, I pushed the smaller bone into the larger bone. I was

able to make some halfway decent calls by sucking on the wingbone caller, and I decided to take the smoothbore out the following Saturday and try to lure a bird in with my homemade call.



Everything was ready the following Friday evening, and my blaze orange cap, vest, camo, decoy and flintlock were assembled in the garage. But that night I was startled out of a sound sleep by thunder and flashes of lightning, and when my alarm went off at 4:30, the storm was still raging. As the prospect of carrying a muzzleloader with a 42-inch "lightning rod" barrel didn't seem appealing, I decided to wait out the weather.

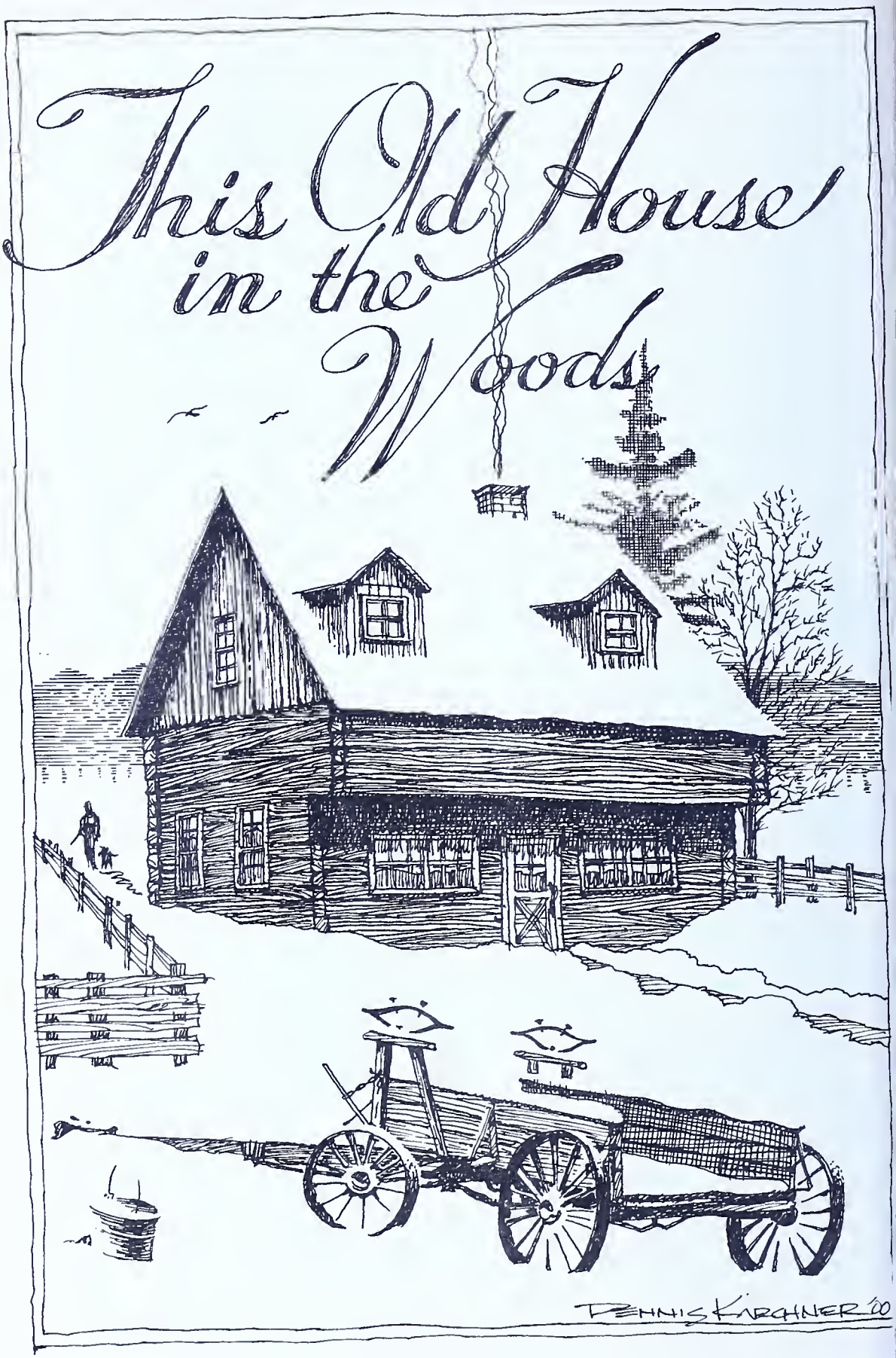
Eventually the storm subsided, so I went outside and loaded up the flintlock, covering the lock mechanism with a "cow knee," which is a greased leather covering tied around the lock to keep water out. I crossed a field behind my house and climbed a ridge covered in hemlock, where I had scored on a gobbler several years earlier.

Although the rain had stopped, the air was still damp. Fortunately, I had taken additional precautions, such as running a bead of bore lube along the barrel channel for about a foot from the lock to prevent any water running down along the barrel and into my priming powder. Any water or moisture can mess up the ignition of a flintlock, but I knew that proper preparation and protection would increase my odds of the gun going off when called upon to do so.

Once settled, I called on the wingbone for about a half hour but got no response. Thoughts about what I needed to do around the house, coupled with my lack of seeing or hearing any turkeys, became overpowering. But just as I went to pick up my hen decoy, the sun broke through the clouds, and I felt that I just had to give it a few more minutes. I repositioned the decoy and began calling once again. In the blink of an eye I saw some turkeys heading my way. I eased my gun to my knee and watched as four jakes approached, with their short stubby beards evident. Although I would have preferred a longbeard, I decided that if any of the jakes came into range, I would take a shot. The birds appeared interested in my decoy but wouldn't cross the small brook to get to it. Still, they were within 30 yards, and they turned upstream, apparently looking for a place to cross. As the birds walked single file, I picked an opening between two trees, and when the last bird stepped into it, I pulled the trigger. The hammer dropped but the flintlock didn't go off.

I cocked the hammer and squeezed again, and much to my surprise, the gun fired and the bird went down. As the smoke cleared, I struggled to reload while still sitting down. Reloading a long rifle and trying to remain concealed is not easy, but I eventually succeeded and was up and over the stream looking for my bird. I found him wedged between two fallen logs.

After tagging the bird I was anxious to get home and spread the news of my success. Naturally, I had to post a short message on the Internet to let my black powder mentors know that I had scored with my new flintlock. To say this was one of the biggest thrills of my hunting life would be an understatement. If you'd like to experience a greater challenge in your turkey hunting, try a flintlock. The thrill of taking a gobbler the old fashioned way makes it all worthwhile. □


This Old House in the Woods
DENNIS KIRCHNER '00

AS A BOY, much like a young, curious, adventurous Grizzly Adams, I happily and gratefully became a hunter, man, trapper and amateur naturalist because of a place in the woods I called "home." Back then, in Westmoreland County, just six miles out of the then little town of Greensburg, I lived near Roadman's Lake at a place referred to as "The Woods," "Penn's Woods" or "Joey Parry's Woods."

Today, 47 years later, I sit in yet another old house in the woods, all but unable to count my many blessings. For seemingly I have been blessed because of being able to live in old houses in the woods through much of my life.

More importantly, however, my two growing and wonderful children, and our family dog, Bear, were blessed, too, by growing up in old houses in the woods. In this case, I'd have to say, "God's Woods." For they, too, grew up loving, appreciating and understanding a unique, wilderness "religion," wherein wildlife, nature and wild things great and small were in the deepest sense their fellow parishioners. Here, they learned that the earth was in a sense their mother, the sky their father, or in a celestial word, they were children of God.

Because of my dislike for cities, civilization and commercialized concrete, my children are better for it. They both agree, now, that living in God's Woods made their lives what they are today. Now they can barely handle the chaotic, hectic, hurried life found in more populated places.

Back in 1951, just outside of Greensburg, I began hunting pheasants, rabbits, grouse and even bobwhite quail. Unlike today, children could be trusted with guns. And when seasons allowed, this little Grizzly Adams was hard at it on a 3-mile trapline every day before sunup and schoolbus arrival time, making a paltry income to eventually buy a 1951 Chevy coupe.

I carried an old Stevens single-shot back then, and Pap never worried about it. I all but burned out the barrel of that Crackshot model, shooting trapped furbearers, sitting cottontails and slow-running ringnecks. I walked in unrestricted freedom, rifle in trained hands, ensuring neighbors that "Joey" was on the prowl, but everyone knew that my gun was in safe hands.

I had been fully trained in safe gun handling by a hard-nosed father, who was a heavily decorated WWII veteran, a soft-hearted grandfather whose Fox double I still carry, and an elder friend one Buck Budd of Connellsville. Buck was his name, honestly, and a finer gentleman and better hunter has yet to be born. Buck was my uncle on Mom's side. Cancer killed him.

I recall one time long ago I bested Buck in a long shooting session. I was deeply saddened by victory, as I thought then, as now, that I'd beaten the best and there was nothing more to learn or achieve. I was wrong, of course. A hunter, a handler of guns, is forever a student. Just last deer season I learned a lesson I thought would never be a part of my hunting life. My rifle fired as I placed the 3-position safety in the middle position. A faulty trigger setting was to blame, but had I been in a hunting crowd, no one would have come close to being shot, because I always have the gun pointed in a safe position. I shook with fear, though, and wasted no time in running home to exchange the rifle for another. I recall the short, nervous conversation with my wife, Linda, as she prepared breakfast for our daughter, Erika. "What are you doing home so early, (it was only 6 a.m.) did you get your buck already?"

"No. Just came in to change guns," I said, not wanting to explain what had happened.

By Joe Parry

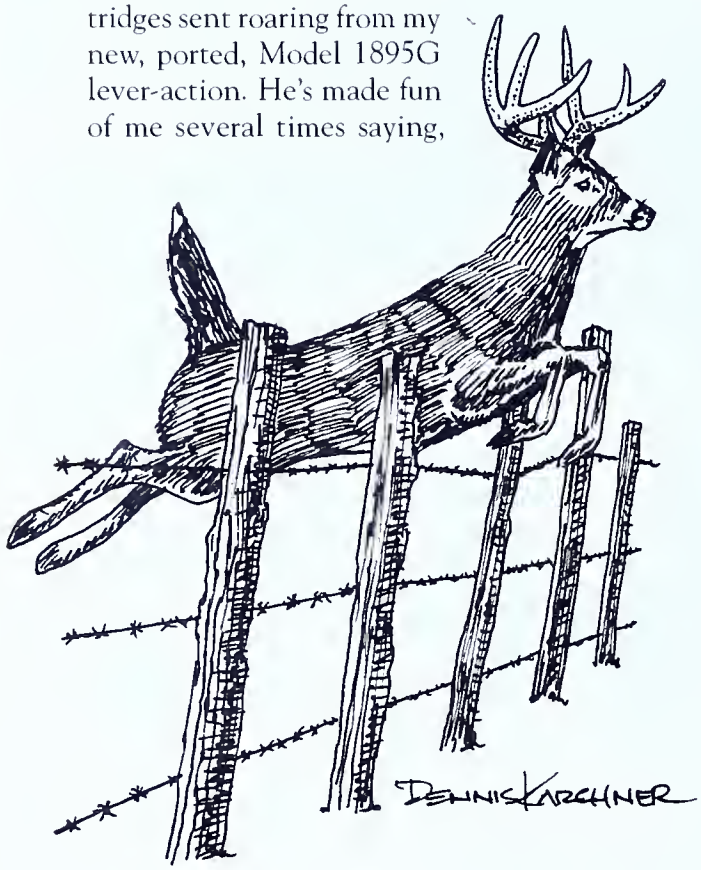
But back to this old house of today. With me having had four major heart attacks and no health insurance, today we're renting a house in God's Woods. Nonetheless, we're grateful to even have shelter and serenity insofar as our nearby woodlands are concerned. Badly damaged heart and all, I can walk out from my office to hunt whitetails, and squirrel hollows abundant in hickory and walnuts, and grouse coverts and swampy bear haunts are but a few moments walk from this old house.

Also, and gratefully so, I've learned to dearly love my landlords, Aileen and Francis English. To my entire family they're better than family. Without them, their many sincere considerations for me and my medical condition, life would be without buffering love and hope and dreams in this old house. And Francis doesn't mind my incessant target practice with some heavily loaded .45-70 cartridges sent roaring from my new, ported, Model 1895G lever-action. He's made fun of me several times saying, "You're too soft-hearted anymore to kill anything."

"Except targets, right, Fran?" I'd say. And he was right until one day I dumped a nuisance woodchuck with a single shot from the wonderful little Marlin 25N .22.

Last deer season three legal bucks walked past my morning stand on the mountain near what I call, "The Point." In the afternoon, reminiscent of Indian summer, I passed on yet another within range of my .45-70.

Taking out the trash one day before the season I spotted some deer near a tree I refer to as, "Lonely Hemlock." I grabbed the 7x50 binoculars and took a good look at the small herd about 450 yards from this old house of Fran's and mine. The one buck, an 8-point larger than even any big mulie I'd killed out West, was chased away by an even bigger buck. I figured this deer went 170 points by Boone & Crockett measuring standards. He was unbelievable, and my son, Justin, had the rush of seeing him through the binocs. "Oh m'gosh, Pop! He's incredible."



Justin asked whether I'd shoot him if I got the chance, and I said I wasn't sure. I'd make that decision if God allowed me the opportunity. I also told my wife that I would love to know for certain I could kill that buck, that he may be the only one I'd settle for during the season. As the season came, progressed and ultimately went, I never once saw him. I did see his tracks and knew I was close to him, but he still lives, breathes and haunts my every night's dreams.

Within a short walk from our 100-plus-year-old rental house, there are hickory covered hillsides, meadows and fields, grub-laden rotting logs for bears, thick multiflora and

grapevine grouse covers and some transient woodcock holdover cover. And so I sit in this old house, writing, gazing at evening stars — and even wishing on them — and you most likely know just exactly what those wishes are. I watch fawns being born, grouse brood training sessions, laugh at the biologists' notions and theories regarding grouse cycles (What are those, teensy weensy Harley Davidsons?).

I conjure up the memories of my wife hot-footing it down on our flagstone walkway when a huge bear stepped out of our woods across the road just 50 yards away, then sat down to ponder what he was looking at, which was my terrified, coffee-spilling spouse of some 26 years.

I find simple joy in the sunrise coming up over the wooded area across from this old house, and bathe in its warmth with each cup of coffee I sip in the morning sun in our front lawn. I giggle like a school gal as I watch chipmunks and birds fight over sunflower seeds in my crude, backyard feeder. I'll never forget the doe giving birth to triplets almost right under my scrutinizing nose, and watching them bound away like kangaroos a few hours later. Ah, the many natural joys I've experienced near Fran's old house.

I love these woods, which have been made even better with regard to quality white-tailed bucks. I love the fact that we've been able to raise our children in an environment of purity, nature and its many wonderfully mysterious sights and sounds. And, indeed, I love knowing my beloved dog, Bear, and I may always walk in freedom to the enchanting woodland across the road. To pray, play, love and laugh at the cold, gray skies of late winter. I love to be reminded of how small I am in relation to the natural scheme of things. And I most love enjoying the wild places with my dearest friend, Bear, and literally thrive with the knowledge that all of this, and some things I've yet to experience, are just beyond my door, the door to this old house. □



Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

The Birds of Pennsylvania, by Gerald M. McWilliams and PGC biologist Daniel W. Brauning, Cornell University Press, Sage House, 512 E. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850, 493 pp., clothbound, $39.95. This comprehensive, up-to-date book will complement the many field guides and general bird books on the market. Covered are 428 species, every species known to have ever nested, wintered or migrated through Pennsylvania. Each species write up includes sections on general status in North America or worldwide; habitat; seasonal status and distribution in Pennsylvania; and history. Introductory chapters on historical perspectives on birds in Pennsylvania, seasonal calendar of birdlife, birding hotspots here, and much more, make for interesting reading, too. This book is sure to be treasured by everybody with an interest in Pennsylvania's rich birdlife.

Father, Son and a Gobbler

By Steve Martin

GENTLY PUSHING the car door closed I stepped back and paused. A brilliant full moon hung over the mountain, casting shadows on the ground. Stars, like millions of sparkling diamonds, filled the sky. Full light would come quickly, well before shooting time, making it that much more important to reach our listening spot on time. Taking a deep breath of the cool fresh air, I headed toward the mountain, my senses on full alert and tingling with anticipation. Today was special, one I had dreamed of for 12 years. Today would be my son's first spring gobbler hunt. We carried only one gun, and although unloaded, I carefully cradled it in my arm. Even with such a brilliant moon, navigating the trail can be tricky enough for a young hunter.

As we made our way across the hardwood flat that gradually rose toward the mountain, it seemed as if we were



being swallowed up. Occasional patches of hemlock gave way to towering white pines as we climbed higher into the darkness. Pausing on a small bench we caught our breath and stared up out of the inky shadows at the moon, which now hung lower in the sky. An eerie chorus of spring peepers rose from a swampy basin below us. Silently we savored the moment together, but when the soft chirp of a waking robin told me that it was time to move on, we did so. For if my instincts were right, a gobbler waited farther out the ridge.

We gingerly made our way out the ridge to a pile of logs that would serve as our first listening post just as the faint glow in the east was growing in intensity. I dropped to one knee beside the weathered logs while Ryan found a comfortable seat. Pointing the Ithaca Model 37 in a safe direction, I carefully pressed a shell into place and gently worked the action. With the muzzle pointed skyward, I inserted two more rounds, checked the safety and relaxed to wait.

Suddenly, rocked by the booming gobble of a tom, my senses went on alert and adrenaline rushed through my body. "Let's go!" I said as I turned to see Ryan's wide-eyed expression of excitement. This same scene had been played out in my mind many times before this day and had been carefully rehearsed with Ryan. Hunched over and still carrying the shotgun, I began carefully moving toward the gobbler, with Ryan right behind me. I knew where this bird was roosted, but we had precious little time to move into position. Closing the distance by about 50 yards, I whispered to Ryan that we'd let him gobble again before we made our next move. "We don't want to get too close and spook him," I said.

Gobble-obble-obble-obble! My pulse quickened as his challenge to the new day boomed through the woods below us. With no leaves yet on the trees and unable to hold back the rising sun, we could move no closer to this bird. We'd have to set up quickly, and I didn't like the looks of our surroundings.

We were on an exposed bench with the mountain rising behind us for a short distance before breaking onto another broad bench. Our only choice for a good setup would be to actually move away from the bird onto the bench above us. Although a good 150 yards from the bird, we would be able to see his approach below us once he got to within 75 yards. From there we would momentarily lose sight of him while he climbed the rise to our bench. But when he'd clear the rise we'd have him at 25 yards. The bird gobbled again.

Hunching over, we cautiously climbed to the bench above us. Choosing a large oak, I quietly cleared the leaves and sticks away from its base. This broad tree would protect our backs as well as break our outlines. Ryan and I quickly switched our blaze orange hats for camouflage, and I hung mine on a nearby sapling for safety.

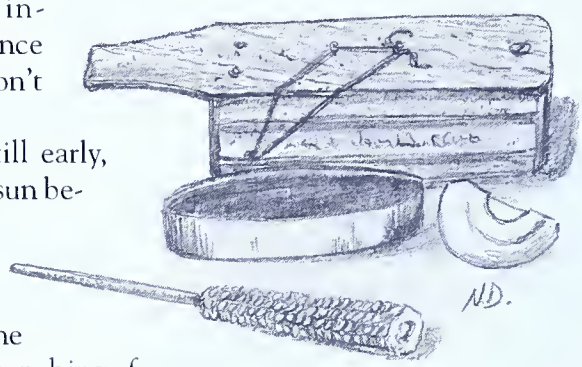
Gobble-obble-obble-obble! With heart pounding I sat against the oak with my knees up. As we had previously practiced, Ryan would sit between my legs and lean against me. After hurriedly donning camouflage gloves and headnets, I handed the gun to Ryan. "While he's climbing the rise is when we'll make any adjustments," I whispered. "When we see him after that he'll be in range, but don't shoot until I tell you." The stage was now set and we both brimmed with excitement.

Positioning a mouth call against my palate I gently breathed out four soft yelps. A loud gobble blasted back in response. My pulse quickened with anticipation, and I could only wonder what thoughts were going through Ryan's mind.

"Now that he knows exactly where we are," I whispered, "I'm done call-

ing until he's on the ground. If I keep calling he might just stay in the tree and keep gobbling, hoping that the 'hen' would come to him." Tense moments passed as I silently prayed that the gobbler would come our way. The tom was still gobbling, but he sounded different than before; his gobbles were muffled. "He's on the ground," I whispered, "get ready."

As Ryan rested the gun on his knee I let loose with a series of excited clucks, ending in a long, pleading yelp. The bird double gobbled. "Keep the gun pointed at the sound," I instructed, "But once he's in sight don't move."



Although still early, the first rays of sun began hitting the exposed ridge below us as we heard the unmistakable crunching of dry leaves as the gobbler walked in our direction. "I see him!" Ryan hissed excitedly.

"Be still. Don't move," I responded in a calming tone as the big tom stalked through the trees toward us. A long, thick beard was clearly visible, swinging from his chest as he walked.

Stepping into a clearing below us, the gobbler spread his tail and went into full strut, his body glimmering like a jewel on the sun-washed "theater" below. *Oooomm, pfffft* was the drumming and spitting sound that could be heard emanating from the bird. Spinning in a complete circle, the tom soon deflated himself only to stretch his neck towards us and explode in a thunderous double gobble. Then he went back into full strut, taking tiny quivering steps, wing tips dragging across the forest floor, always being sure to keep his fan turned in our direction.

As the drama continued below, the scene was permanently etched in our minds. What a beautiful sight to behold. It was such a blessing to share this with my son. But suddenly, the gobbler deflated again, sent a booming gobble in our direction and stood staring intently toward the bench where we waited. The hair raised on the back of my neck for I knew what was coming.

Cautiously, the gobbler began to walk toward us, his long, black beard swinging like a pendulum and leaves crunching under his feet, growing louder with each step. As he disappeared into the blind spot, I whispered for Ryan to shift the gun slightly to his right. Suddenly, a brilliant red head appeared above the rise, then the neck and a glimmering black breast with a swinging beard as he angled uphill and slightly to our right. Twenty-five yards, 24 yards, 23. "Okay," I breathed.

As Ryan shifted the gun no more than an inch to the right, back sprang the snake-like neck. His black, beady eyes locked onto the movement as he sounded a sharp *Putt! Putt!* Then *boom!* Down in a flurry of flapping wings and flying leaves the gobbler tumbled backwards over the rise. Ryan jumped to his feet, muzzle pointed skyward and ejected the spent shell. "Safety on," I blurted as I also sprang to my feet. Being careful to avoid his sharp spurs and still flapping wings, I pressed my weight onto him as he kicked and quivered his last. Silently offering a prayer of thanks, I looked up to see Ryan excitedly making his way to me.

"I can't believe I got a gobbler! He's huge!" was all he could say.

Shaking Ryan's hand, I congratulated

him on a job well done as we admired the fallen monarch. Bronze, orange, purple and green hues glistened as rays of the rising sun angled down through the trees. His 9½-inch beard was full and heavy; 1 1/8-inch spurs adorned his legs. With trembling hands Ryan filled out his tag and we secured it to the leg.

This time I would field-dress the bird and even carry the gun back down the mountain. But today, Ryan would experience the feel of a 20-plus-pound gobbler over his shoulder. Somehow, I knew he'd enjoy every step. At just 6:30, it seemed too early to head back to the car, but we were more than satisfied. Besides, we now had a few stops to make on the way home, some stories to tell and some pictures to take.

Lifting the gobbler to Ryan's shoulder, I helped him get comfortable as he grabbed hold of the pink, scaly legs with two hands. With the tail partly fanned and wings hanging loosely, Ryan seemed to disappear behind the gobbler as the bird's head hung below his knees. I was glad that in addition to our orange hats, we had also brought our orange vests as an extra measure of safety.

With my fannypack comfortably in place and gun in hand, I took one last look at what had just become a very special place. Memories were made today that would last a lifetime. White, puffy clouds floated aimlessly against a brilliant blue sky. The enchanting, flute-like call of a wood thrush drifted out the ridge. A crow called somewhere off in the distance and a red-tailed hawk screamed defiantly as it sailed on a rising thermal. Reliving the morning and talking of hunts to come, a father, a son and a gobbler headed for home. ☐

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Penn's Woods Sketchbook

HOPELAND

Bob Sopchick

YOUNG JACOB MILLER rises from the depths of his corn husk mattress to the light of a new summer day, pulled to his feet by the delicious aroma of fresh cornbread and sizzling eggs and ham in a skillet. The soft tones of his parents' conversation drift up from the kitchen to the sleeping loft that he shares with his younger sisters, twins Kate and Abby. Jacob pulls on his breeches and peers at the misty fields through a slot where the chinking has popped out between two logs. At the far end of the cornfield he sees several stalks shake, although there is no wind, and scrambles down the ladder.

"Pa! Pa! There's somethen in the corn! Might be that bear agin."

His father, Aaron, grabs the flintlock, slides out the door, neck craned. Jacob sneaks along with him, carrying his own rifle, and whispers. "Up by the woods, Pa. There. See the tassels movin?"

Father and son sprint along the rail fence, then into the rows where dozens of hogs are stripping the stalks. They try to drive off the animals, firing the guns into the air, but the hogs scatter only momentarily then reform around them, and the farmer sees that these are but the first wave of a greater herd, a river of swine that flows out of the dark woods. They stream into the rows then up to Anna's garden where he hears her angry shouts.

Anna swings her hoe wildly, trying in vain to drive the swine from her pampered rows, but the crush of the herd is too great. In the yard the twins frantically gather a few scurrying peeps into a basket, but most are inhaled by the hungry swine. Hens squawk from a railing as the geese flap and honk. The twins squeal in unison as a huge spotted hog tries to run into the cabin, but they drive it off with a broom and shut the door. The herd is now within the broken pen of their own three hogs, and Anna tries to corral their stock but they are lost in the flowing herd. Through teary eyes she sees three drovers make their way down to her husband.

The drovers are a father and his two grown sons, as bristly and feral as their charges. They carry gnarled staffs, and one a short barreled musket. Aaron unleashes a furious tirade, demanding compensation for the destruction, but the elder drover only grunts at the farmer's demands.

"Weren't no one livin' 'long this creek two year ago, said the drover. We allus come this way, now yeer settled here. We never knowed they was farmin' way up here. I would pay ye some, but we're poor folk, too.

Anna strode up to them, fists clenched, just as the tail end of the herd moved by. "Our corn is ruint, my garden gone, our hogs mixed in with yourn. You'll allow three to stay in their stead."

"Three hogs? Mighten only been two you had," said the younger drover with the musket.

"Mighten only been one," added his brother evenly.

"I'll pay ye for three hogs after market said the elder drover. We'll get back up this way come late fall."

Aaron sensed a hollow ring to the drover's pledge. "You'll let the hogs now. We may be starved out then. Cut three out now."

The drovers surround the farmer, separating him from his family in the way they might a hog. "Ye'll have one now, fair market price of two later. Thet one, he pointed, thet least one yander. Cut 'em back, Caleb," he said to his son.

Jacob pushed his way in next to his father. "Our hogs was biggern that runt, 'n fat, too, I slopped 'em myself ever day."

"A hog'll get bigger son, jest like ye who is naught but a runt now and a might too big for his britches," said the drover. The sons snickered.

"Jacob's right, Aaron said. Cut out a biggen, that runt ain't near fair trade."

"A pig's a pig, said the taller of the drover's sons. Take it or leave it. We got to keep on."

Aaron turned and saw the musket leveled on him and knew that he had to accept. The deflated family watched the drovers fade into the dusty aftermath of what seemed a plague from the Good Book itself.

At noon the next day their closest neighbor, Seth Grove clopped in on a mule. The Groves lived a half day's ride to the south, and at the farthest end of the valley another family, the Harkoms. Seth was the only son of Hiram Grove, who had taken ill in late spring. Seth's mother had passed on the year before and their tenuous grip on the land loosened, then slipped entirely after Hiram was ravaged by the consumption.

Seth sat at the table surrounded by the children while Anna served tea. "Pa is suffern greatly, he said. Looks like ye have your troubles, too. Them drovers took the road past our place, but it wouldn't a matter if they come right through our farm, grown all wild as it is. I got to git Pa out from here. He wants to sell the farm afore he dies. He says theys buyers for the land up here, with more folk headin' out from the east. It's good land, but too much for me alone. I come up to bid ye farewell."

The family sagged with the realization that their closest link to the world would be gone. "Could just be that another family, a big family with lots of youngens will buy your place," Aaron said more to his family than to Seth. The twins brightened immediately, and Anna sent them outside. Jacob climbed to the loft where he could listen and clean his rifle.

Aaron spoke softly. "Seth, we still got some money from afore we moved up. It's enough to get us through winter to plantin' time. We was savin' it, but now we got to use it to get store-bought to get us through. I was goin' to go myself, but I'd be gone a long while and there's plenty to do here. If'n it ain't too much to ask, could I hire ye to bring back the store-bought? It would hep us so, and get ye some money besides."



Seth agreed. "But I got to git the farm sold and I won't be back afore the last a August or so. Theys some corn down in our stump field, enough for fodder, and the garden has punkin and squarsh and turnip, so hep yerselfs."

From the depths of the blanket chest Anna produced a drawstring bag that held their savings. She handed it to him along with a much edited list of supplies. "And if'n there's anythin' left, bring us a pup or even two. Don't seem right without any dogs about. God's speed, Seth Grove."

In the first week of August the runt pig was carried off by a bear. Only broad, clawed tracks and a few black hairs on a post splinter remained. This added misfortune spurred Aaron to work like a man possessed. By August's end he and Jacob had expanded, then finished fencing in the cornfield. As they labored in the fields each kept one eye on the curve of the lane that led to the farm, hoping to see Seth. September waned, and with their team of oxen they cleared another field of stumps and rocks. The shadows in the larder grew deeper, and they were tiring of milk and mush. Aaron grew hollow-eyed with worry and frustration and his temper flared. Jacob heard his parents talking about what might have happened to Seth, of his being robbed or even killed. Aaron, grown bitter, was convinced he had run off with their savings. The twins set up a daily vigil on the porch, more than once rushing into the cabin yelling that they heard a wagon coming up through the woods, setting Anna's heart to pounding. But Anna kept their hope alive, and at night the twins said a special prayer for Seth's safe return.

October muscled in, cold and rainy, with no hint of Indian summer, nor of Seth. The chestnuts pointed up and fell like a gift from heaven, and they gathered a great store of them. Anna made all manner of foods from that wild harvest. Jacob killed a wild turkey and potted squirrels. By November both geese and most of the hens were gone, and barely enough fodder for the oxen and their cow. At supper, Aaron looked achingly at his family, at the poor provisions, at his wife so gaunt and pale who always managed to scrape up the best meal she could. The twins still talked of the good times that would come when Seth returned, but Aaron refused to speak of him, forbidding them to mention him in his presence. He wanted to pack up and move out, but to what? A winter in the city with a starving family? He could track down Seth, could sell the farm, but Anna always insisted they stay on for just another week.

Deep November, and great patches of snow lay in the hills, and they sorely needed meat. Aaron packed his possibles bag and a few johnny cakes and a blanket and went out to hunt for a few days. Jacob reluctantly stayed behind.

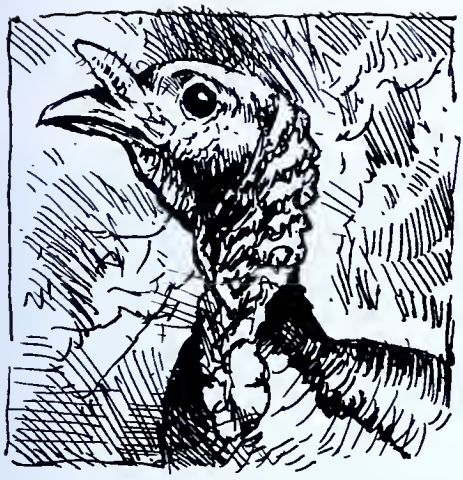
Aaron followed the children's worn path along the creek then cut up a deep hollow high into the uplands. He traveled north, farther than he had ever trod, and came upon several deer tracks and the round tracks of a painter. For two days he roamed the hills, hunting for any sort of game, or ray of hope, to mend the crumbling edges of his soul.

Near the end of the third day he came back to his valley and happened upon a doe and felled it with a ball through the chest. For the first time in months his spirits lifted and he gave thanks even though the deer was but a fawn. After dressing it out he lashed its legs together and slung it over a shoulder, then headed down through the hemlocks.



Jacob checked his possibles bag and packed a canvas sack with rope and a hatchet. He stropped his knife and greased his face as the wind had grown fierce. He bid his mother goodbye, and set out to hunt the broad flat above the farm.

He followed the flat out to where it tapered up to the highest slice of the ridge from where he could hardly make out their fields, a tiny spot of white surrounded by the dark rim of the endless forest. He felt very alone, but determined. Just over the other side of the ridge he scattered



a small flock of turkeys, then hid within the hollow base of a tree and whistled like a poult. A short while later a black form came up through the brush. He swallowed hard when he saw that it was not a turkey, but the hulking form of a bear. It padded towards him, its thick coat rippling over several inches of fat. Jacob shook uncontrollably at first, then placed the silver blade between the bear's eyes, and when the bear stopped, Jacob touched the trigger and the bear collapsed in its tracks only a few rods away.

It took all his might to roll the beast over, and he set to skinning it out. With hatchet and knife he quartered it and stuffed the steaming meat into the hollow tree and dragged big flat rocks from a ledge and entombed it. He cleaned the hide with snow and rolled it in upon itself then bound it with rope and carried it across his shoulders, the head of the bear resting atop his own. It was near dusk when he finished. Now there would be plenty of meat and grease and a thick blanket to keep the twins warm.

Aaron saw the dark shape of a turkey dip and reappear among the darker trunks of the hemlocks. Perhaps his fortune was changing. He sneaks along the flailing branches of the shadowy trees heading the bird off, then set the trigger and knelt, waiting for the bobbing bird to show on a rise. He crooked his finger over the hair trigger and waited anxiously. When the bird popped up it turned and Aaron saw, like a nightmare vision, the shining face of his son, the face of his beloved Jacob below that of a bear. Shaking violently, he eased down the hammer and shouted his son's name and ran and held him and said his name again and again and again.

"I killed him, Pa. I killed him and stowed him in a tree so's we could fetch him later. He's a biggun, Pa, and we got meat enough till Seth gits back. I did good, din't I, Pa?"

Aaron stood on wobbly legs and held his son's innocent face in his hands, and nodded. "We're saved now."

Coming down through the woods towards home, the hunters quickened their pace when they saw several wagons drawn by teams of draft horses and oxen, and more people than they had seen in a long time. It was Seth come back with settlers.

The twins, each holding a pup, ran over with Seth and the men shook hands. Seth explained how his father had passed on before they sold the farm, and in his search for a buyer he met a girl and they married and decided to return to the farm. Her two brothers, experienced farmers with large families, wanted to head north to find new land anyway, and purchased the ground between the valley farms. They packed up all they needed to stay the winter, to clear land and build the homesteads.

Aaron saw Anna's eyes locked on his from across the yard, and as she made her way over to him, escorting Seth's new bride and his father-in-law, a prosperous German who would direct the winter work and building projects.

"Ve all build togedder," said the robust German. "One hepping da udder vun. Ve know da land, and dis land *ist gut*. Vot call you dis valley, Miller?"

"Hopeland," Aaron replied, with Anna squeezing his hand. "A place of hope."

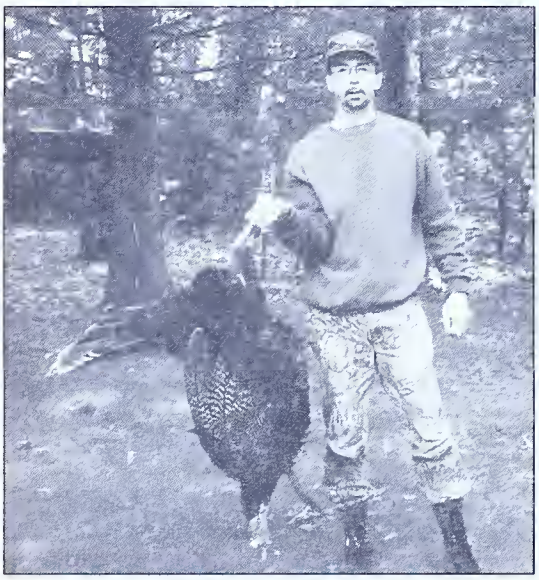
"Hopeland. *Ist gut*, said the German. *Ist gut*."

Struttin'





ZACHARY HEFFERAN, Butler, left, stayed near home to take this 21-pound gobbler — his first — last season. TREVOR SMITH, State College, above, with his mom, Patricia, show off Trevor's first turkey. Trevor taught himself the skills needed to be successful in the spring turkey woods.



KENNY SNYDER, Leck Kill, above, got his 21-pound gobbler with an 11-inch beard on the next to last day of the season last year on public ground in Northumberland County. JEFF GETTYS, Carlisle, right, bagged this 20-pound longbeard in Clinton County.



Time





BRIAN ANDERSON, Clymer, above, got his first spring gobbler in Indiana County last year. HTE Instructor DEBBIE PETRUN, Smithfield, left, got her tom in Fayette County.





JERRIANNE HUNSINGER, Sayre, left, got her first gobbler in West Burlington Township, Bradford County. The 19-pound bird called in by her expert guide and husband, Mike, had a 9-inch beard and 1-inch spurs. R. WAYNE THOMPSON, New Lisbon, New Jersey, above, got his 21-pound gobbler with a 10-inch beard in Ulysess Township, Potter County.

FIELD NOTES

The Kids Need You

VENANGO — Ever wonder what you can do to introduce youngsters to hunting and the outdoors? Participate in Youth Field Days. It's as easy as 1-2-3. 1) Call the Game Commission office. 2) Request the date of the YFD in your county. 3) Arrive at the event about 7:30 a.m. and offer your assistance.

— WCO LEO C. YAHNER, FRANKLIN



Hog Tied

BUCKS — Deputy Roscoe White got a call about a buck that had its antlers tangled in the goal net at a soccer field. He tied a rope around one of the buck's legs to pull it out of the net and it worked, but the deer ran off with the rope still attached to its leg.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM, NEW BRITAIN

Going Strong

BUTLER — I recently received several photostatic copies of *Game News* from the 1930s. The format was quite different than the magazine today, but there were some interesting articles. In this regard nothing has changed in 70 years.

— WCO KEVIN W. THOMPSON, SAXONBURG

Spring Fever

Wildlife sure took advantage of the break in snow cover in February. A visitor to our display at the Eastern Sports and Outdoors Show told me that he and his wife saw 140 deer in a 2-mile stretch of Route 30 in Bedford County. Two days earlier I had seen two flocks of turkeys in the same stretch.

— SE REGION DIRECTOR BARRY K. MOORE, READING

Full Moon?

While manning the check station at Elliott State Park in Clearfield County on the bear season opener, here's what we got in a 2-hour period: A hunter showed up with a license tag from a prior year attached to his bear; a man reported killing a deer in mistake of a coyote; a hunter brought in a bear, then said he had lost his license (turned out he never had one); and a man came in with a pheasant he ran over with his truck.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

"www.tuffturkey.com"

ARMSTRONG — Responding to a call about a wild turkey that had flown through a window at the Kittanning Jr. High School, I was stunned to see a large window on the third floor with an almost perfect flying turkey shaped hole in its center. The room, which was a computer classroom, had a tremendous amount of broken glass on the floor and on the computers, and the turkey was flying around. Amazingly, despite the class being full at the time, nobody was hurt by flying glass when this bird decided to pursue an education. More amazing was that the large jake was not injured, either.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON

Identify Your Target

LEHIGH — Remember, during the spring gobbler season you must identify a beard on a turkey before pulling the trigger. Of all the spring turkey shooting incidents I've investigated, not one shooter could say he saw a beard on the turkey.

— WCO MICHAEL BEAHM, FOGELSVILLE

Sincere Thanks

By cooperating with the Schuylkill County Pheasants Forever Chapter, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation we've received more than $65,000 through several grants for the Mahantango Watershed Restoration Project. We now will be able to build more than 10 miles of streambank fencing and plant more than 1,000 acres of warm season grasses. The goal is to have a wild reproducing pheasant population in the Mahantango Watershed, but these management practices will benefit many wildlife species in addition to the water quality all the way down to the Chesapeake Bay.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

Can't Win

MONTGOMERY — Officials at a business here were constantly calling me about nuisance geese on their property, but this year they said that the large turkey flocks were keeping the geese away. Now they want the turkeys removed.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Spotted the Badge

WYOMING — Deputy Joe Shivock rounded a bend in his patrol car just as a great horned owl lifted off with a rabbit clutched in its talons. The avian predator quickly dropped the bunny, however, when it spotted Joe's vehicle. The rabbit hit the ground then bounced to all fours and scurried off. Because rabbit season was closed, I'd have to say it was a wise old owl indeed.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Good Point

POTTER — Many people believe that predators are ravenous killers that hunt down their prey endlessly. The truth is that some predators feed on fruits and grasses at certain times of the year, and others make use of roadkilled deer. I saw three different bobcats feeding on roadkills here last winter.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Bright Future

YORK — Living close to Harrisburg I routinely work several of the area's sportsman shows, and this year I've noticed a positive attitude change by sportsmen towards the agency in general and the deer management program in particular. Many hunters say they don't see quite as many deer as in past years, but that the bucks they are seeing have much larger racks. I always tell them that that is the way it's supposed to be.

— WCO G.C. HOUGHTON, EMIGSVILLE



Seasons Mixed Up

On February 1, with a foot of snow on the ground, WCO George Wilcox and I noticed two meadowlarks in Montour County. The sightings were a bit different than the lush, green meadows of spring and summer that this bird is most often associated with.

— LMO KEITH P. SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE



Resourceful

SCHUYLKILL — I discovered beavers that had taken up residence in an old abandoned mine tunnel. The crafty rodents had dammed up the acid drainage, seemingly doing their part to clean up the environment.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

It's My Final Answer

I was doing a program at Alice Shafer Elementary School in Linesville when I was paged over the intercom and told that I needed to call Regis at the Northwest Region Office. A young lady in the front row looked at me and excitedly asked, "Regis Philbin?" After recovering from my laughter, I assured her that the Regis that needed to speak with me had no intention of helping me win a million dollars and definitely had no life lines to offer.

— WES RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Took Up the Torch

The last 12 years of my career as a LMO I became very active in managing wildlife habitat with fire. My son, LMO Matt Belding, also has become active in controlled burning, but when his 2½-year-old son, Andrew, set the living room on fire while watching a Barney camping video, I wondered whether the behavior was due to genetics or environment.

— LMO DICK BELDING, RETIRED, WAYNESBURG

Seeing Double

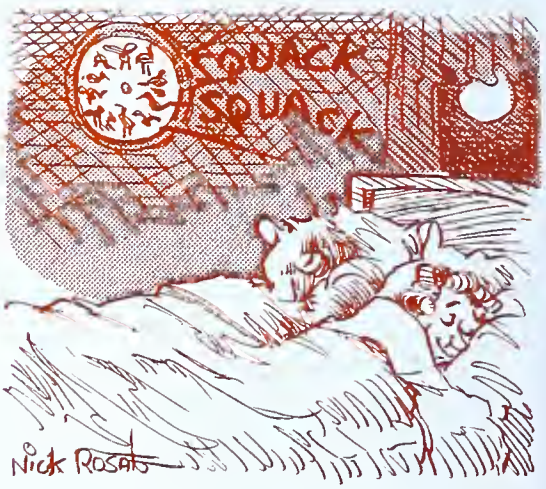
SOMERSET — One day in February I was traveling down a remote mountain road when a large adult bobcat crossed 40 yards in front of my truck and vanished in the cover. I was disappointed that I didn't get a better look at it when a second cat crossed the road in the same spot. That one vanished in a hurry, too, but it sure was a thrill seeing two so close together and knowing they probably were denning somewhere nearby.

— WCO DANIEL W. JENKINS, BERLIN

Tooth and Fang

A large red-tailed hawk zoomed just above my windshield with a gray squirrel clutched in its talons. The bushytail looked like a ceramic statue plucked from a windowsill of a gift shop. Knowing nature, I'm sure its end came swiftly.

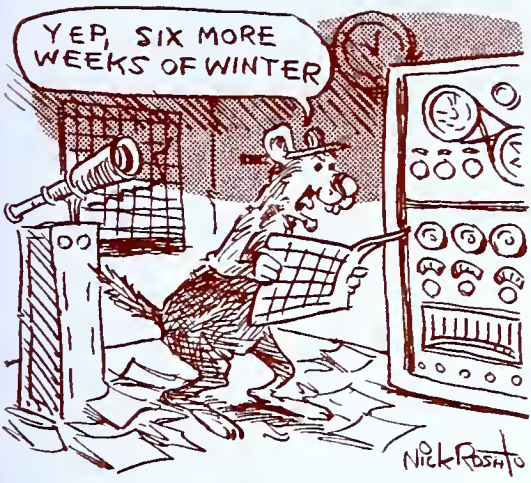
— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS



Better than an ID Course

MERCER — On February 12 several late season goose hunters spotted a group of 15 sandhill cranes near the Shenango Reservoir. Two of the men had seen this species in Canada, but the third hunter, despite never seeing a crane, knew what the big birds were as soon as he heard them. It seems his wife got him a clock that featured audible bird calls every hour, and 1 o'clock is the sandhill crane.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE



Wrong Forecast

ERIE — On February 2 the famous groundhog announced there would be six more weeks of winter. I think he missed the boat, though. On February 21 I saw approximately 30 wood ducks and picked up a dead woodcock from the road in front of my home. These migratory birds are truly birds of spring.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Blackbeard

Assistant Regional Forester Tom Lewis was working on SGL 198 in Blair County when he noticed a flock of turkeys feeding on a hillside. Nothing unusual about that with today's exploding turkey population, except that one of the birds was pure white except for its 6-inch jet black beard.

— LMO STEPHEN A. KLEINER, ALTOONA

Bifocals

BEDFORD — A friend told me that her grandmother had been feeding a stray cat for nearly a month and about how friendly it had become, even letting the elderly lady scratch it behind the ears when it was eating with the woman's house cats. Realizing that her grandmother had failing eyesight, my friend asked the older woman what the cat looked like. Grandma could describe the cat only as being black and white. You guessed it; Grandma had been feeding a skunk.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Concrete Jungle

GREENE — WCOs from rural counties sometimes have difficulty with directions in urban areas, and recently when Fayette County WCO Stan Norris had to travel to Pittsburgh I overheard an interesting radio conversation. When asked his location, I knew Stan was in trouble when he replied, "between two tall buildings."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Not My Day

MCKEAN — While patrolling on SGL 61 last winter my snowmobile broke down, so I contacted Deputy Gordon Liezert to pick me up. He brought me a borrowed snowmobile, but a few miles down the trail that one broke down, too. I've made plans to use a dog sled team next winter.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Birds Galore

Turkey flocks seem to get bigger each year here in northern Dauphin County. I counted one flock last winter that had 97 birds.

— LMO SCOTT R. BILLS, HALIFAX

Stumped

CUMBERLAND — WES Don Martin and I were giving a wildlife program to 4th grade students at Silver Spring Elementary School when one young lady asked why a fisher is called a fisher if it doesn't eat fish. Well, Don, I hope you had better luck finding the answer than I did.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

Catch and Release

Tim Fox was hunting one day last winter when his English setter went on point, and he was able to see the grouse hunched down in the thick cover so he reached down and grabbed it. Sure saves on shotgun shells and gun cleaning. The bird was released to be hunted another day.

— LMO CLIFFORD E. GUINDON, BOSWELL

Glad He's There

CLARION — I would like to extend my appreciation to all the deputies in Clarion County who helped me out after the untimely passing of WCO Dave Beinhaur last December. It was a tough few months for all of us, and we welcome WCO Rod Bimber into the district.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM



That'll Teach Him

On February 23 a man called from a cell phone to report a terrible skunk odor coming from under his vehicle. I suggested that perhaps a skunk had sprayed the tires. An hour later he called back to say that the smell was stronger. I told him that the muffler and tailpipe possibly got sprayed, and being an oil-based substance, the hotter the vehicle got, the stronger the odor. An hour later the man called again to say the smell was unbearable. I told him that the skunk might be hiding up under the wheelwell, but he told me I was crazy. The man called a fourth time to explain that he took the vehicle to a car wash, thinking he could get rid of the smell by washing it when a large, wet skunk dropped from the vehicle's undercarriage. I promptly said, "Paul, don't come home until the smell is gone." Yes, it was my husband.

— DISPATCHER DIANE GRIMES, NE REGION OFFICE, DALLAS

Mystery

ADAMS — I got a call about a farmer near Littlestown who had a fox in his hen house and 11 of his chickens were missing. When I arrived there were feathers scattered around the coop but the chickens were nowhere around, and the fox — extremely sick with mange — was curled up in a corner. We knew that the chickens couldn't have gotten out and that the fox could not have eaten them all, and we were puzzled until I noticed a chicken's foot just barely sticking above the straw. After digging around, we found all 11 chickens had been killed and buried by the fox, but only one had been partially eaten.

— WCO LARRY HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Blackmail?

BRADFORD — My wife and I visited the Game Commission display at the Eastern Sports and Outdoors Show, and because all of the personnel were busy I asked a man waiting in line if I could answer his question. The man immediately took off his shirt to show me a large, ugly scar on his back, and he asked if the agency had ever considered giving free hunting licenses to people with disabilities. After he left, LMO Dave Koppenhaver said, "Bill, we usually don't make them undress to ask questions." Now, I had Dave as a trainee back in 1977, so I told him I could still give him a poor grade if his version of this story appeared as a Field Note instead of mine.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Freak Accident

Deputy Ray Hummel was called about a dead great blue heron someone had found, and when he arrived he discovered that the bird had a 10-inch bass stuck partway down its throat. At first Ray thought the bird had bitten off more than it could chew, but when he removed the fish he found a jig lure hook sticking through the fish and attached to the heron's tongue, which prevented the bird from swallowing the fish.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

April Commission meeting highlights

DRAMATIC new hunting and trapping opportunities highlight the 2000-2001 seasons and bag limits approved by the Commission at its April meeting. Perhaps most significant are the many new hunting opportunities designed to stabilize the growth of the deer population.

Innovative steps taken to provide greater hunting opportunities include:

- a regular statewide three-day antlerless deer season that begins on a Saturday, Dec. 9, concurrent with the last day of the rifle buck season;
- an October statewide muzzleloader season for antlerless deer that begins on a Saturday, Oct. 21;
- the ability to issue unsold antlerless deer licenses to hunters for use on private property or public lands with an approved deer management plan;
- concurrent buck-doe seasons for junior and senior hunters, as well as holders of disabled person permits to use a vehicle for hunting, with required licenses; and
- continuing the opportunity to harvest either an antlered or antlerless deer on Deer Damage Farm Areas throughout the state.

Additionally, specific language was adopted to ensure the agency's ability to extend the antlerless season if there is a need, based on consultations with Commissioners and Commission regional offices.

While hunters may take only one antlered deer per hunting license year, commissioners approved a proposal to allow, during certain deer hunting seasons, the taking of more than one deer per day, but not at the same time. Once a hunter harvests a deer, he or she must transport and secure that first deer at a vehicle, permanent or temporary camp, residence, deer processing facility, or a "pick-up" point before taking a second or subsequent deer.

Watch next month's issue for a complete listing of 2000-01 seasons and bag limits, or visit the agency's web site, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Antlerless allocations

BASED on the increased hunter efficiencies expected from the new seasons and bag limits, Commissioners approved a statewide antlerless license allocation for the 2000-2001 seasons of 744,900, which is some 52,000 less than last year's allocation. These figures do not include the six Special Regulation Area counties. The statewide total including the Special Regulation Area counties is 830,650, which is lower than the previous year's allocation by more than 60,000.

"We are looking to stabilize the growth of the deer herd through the seasons and bag limits we adopted to-

day," said Game Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr, who chairs the agency's Wildlife Management Committee. "I'm pleased with the cooperation that was offered by Dr. Gary Alt and the Deer Management Section in preparing these seasons and bag limits."

"By working within the newly structured seasons, hunters will help correct the imbalance in the buck/doe ratio and will help us take the first steps toward quality deer management," said Dr. Gary Alt, who heads the Deer Management Section. Alt attended more than 50 meetings in 34 counties to discuss the deer proposals.

He also appeared on Pennsylvania Cable Network's Call-In statewide television program on March 16 to address deer management and answer caller's questions.

"Through these meetings and interviews, we were able to explain to Pennsylvania's hunters and wildlife enthusiasts the objectives behind our proposals," Alt said. "Once they had an opportunity to hear our presentation, we won their support and encouragement for future changes."

Alt also provided Commissioners with an update of the research projects being conducted by the Deer Management Section to look into issues such as fawn mortality, the buck-doe ratio, and the relationship between reproduction rates and nutrition in deer populations. He noted that, as part of the fawn mortality study, the Commission will put radio collars on 80 fawns to conduct additional studies on home range and movement.

Bobcat seasons adopted

FOR THE FIRST TIME in nearly 30 years, furtakers will have a chance to take a bobcat in Pennsylvania. "The highly regulated bobcat hunting and trapping seasons will provide a limited number of sportsmen a once-in-a-lifetime type of hunting or trapping opportunity," said Dr. Matthew Lovallo, PGC furbearer biologist. "As adopted, these seasons will provide for sustainable use of a renewable wildlife resource without adversely affecting the population growth."

Game Commissioner Robert J. Gilford, who initiated the proposal, stressed that the Game Commission would not propose nor endorse any proposal that would endanger the bobcat population. "In 1970, the Game Commission and hunters moved to close the bobcat seasons out of a concern for dwindling numbers," Gilford explained. "However, after 30 years of protection and 15 years of intensive field research, we now can offer this limited hunting and trapping opportunity without threatening this valuable wildlife resource."

Lovallo estimated that the state's adult breeding bobcat population to be between 3,000 and 3,500, and growing at a rate of 4 to 6 percent annually. The majority of this year's litters will be born in May. Between 60 and 100 bobcats are killed on Pennsylvania highways annually.

Noting that this effort is not a predator control venture, Lovallo said that the commission is expecting a conservative harvest of 175 bobcats with the 290 permits that will be offered. Furtakers will be allowed to harvest bobcats in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, which cover all or parts of 20 counties in northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania.

To distribute the limited bobcat permits, the agency will accept applications from holders of resident furtaker licenses, or junior or senior combination licenses, along with a non-refundable $5 fee. Those then selected in a random drawing will receive one permit at no additional charge to either hunt or trap a bobcat.

The hunting season will run from Oct. 14, 2000, through Feb. 24, 2001. The trapping season will run from Oct. 15, 2000, through Feb. 24, 2001.

The Game Commission's "Bobcat Management Plan" may be reviewed on the Commission's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us, select "Newsroom," then choose "2000 News Releases" and "News Release #20-00."

Ross offers update on state game lands tours

IN RECOGNITION of the importance of habitat improvement, Executive Director Vern Ross updated the Commissioners on his tours of state game lands. "We have pledged to fulfill our commitment of spending $9 million on habitat improvement," Ross said at the April Commission meeting. "Before we invest that amount of money, we owe it to the hunters and trappers of Pennsylvania to do a complete inspection of the habitat we currently have, what needs to be done and what we need to do the job effectively and efficiently.

"So far, I've toured 24 state game lands in the southcentral and southwestern regions. And what I've found is that the Game Commission's habitat management program is the greatest story never told. Yes, there is work that needs to be done, but there are tremendous success stories out there that the public has never been told about."

Game Commissioner Samuel Dunkle and Commission staff have accompanied Ross on the tours.

In related news, Ross noted that the Game Commission's Habitat Advisory Committee recently met to begin the process of prioritizing the state game lands that are in most need of attention. The committee also selected officers, including: state Rep. Ed Staback, honorary chairman; Brian Brake of Pheasants Forever, chairman; Jerry Zimmerman of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, vice-chairman; and Janet Nyce of the Lehigh Chapter of the Safari Club International, secretary.

"The Game Commission is grateful these dedicated individuals have stepped forward to volunteer their advice and guidance as the Commission prepares to move forward in the most comprehensive investment in habitat improvement in the agency's history," Ross said.

In addition to Ross, the agency's members on the advisory committee include Greg Grabowicz, Bureau of Land Management director; Joseph Neville, policy analyst; Game Commissioner Stephen Mohr, Wildlife Management Committee chairman; and Game Commissioner George Venesky, Land Management Committee chairman.

Other advisory committee members include representatives of 12 sportsmen's organizations from across the state.

Otters released in the Youghiogheny

TWO RIVER OTTERS were released into the Youghiogheny River near Confluence in March, the first of what researchers hope will be 12 in the watershed over the next year. A team of employees from the Game Commission, Frostburg State University of Maryland, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund are all involved in the reintroduction project.

"With the vast improvements in water quality in recent years, Pennsylvania's waterways can once again sustain a diversity of wildlife and fish," said Tom Serfass, assistant professor of wildlife ecology at Frostburg State University and leader of Pennsylvania's otter recovery project. "Reintroducing otters to these ecosystems is an important part in helping to restore that diversity.

"The rapid recovery of certain bodies of water in southwestern Pennsylvania is remarkable. This is another example of how water quality influences the well-being of aquatic-dependent wildlife as well as recreational opportunities for people. Otters and sportsmen and sportswomen are allies in the fight for clean water. If otters are able to return to the waterways in this area, it means the Youghiogheny River and its tributaries also will be providing quality fishing opportunities for anglers," Serfass said.

"The reintroduction of otters to the watershed is a result of the largest civil penalty ever levied against a mining company in the history of Pennsylvania's mining program," said Robert Dolence, DEP Mineral Resources Management deputy secretary.

The $625,000 penalty is helping to fund local environmental projects in Somerset County, including:

- $24,000 to the Pennsylvania Wild Resource Conservation Fund to restore river otters to the Youghiogheny River basin;
- $32,000 to the Youghiogheny Riverwatch for stocking fish in the Casselman River;
- $169,000 in penalties directly to DEP; and
- $400,000 to install a passive mine drainage treatment system on Coal Run, a tributary of the Casselman River.

In addition to the penalty, the company was ordered to provide $100,000 to develop a trust fund to pay for the long-term maintenance of the passive treatment system.

Other partners in the otter reintroduction program include the Maryland Department of Natural Resources; the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR); Youghiogheny Riverwatch; the Pennsylvania Trappers Association; Pennsylvania State University; and East Stroudsburg University.

Since 1982, the Game Commission has released more than 100 otters in northcentral and northwestern Pennsylvania, where otter populations are growing, and southwestern Pennsylvania, where otters are beginning to take hold. A healthy native otter population inhabits northeastern Pennsylvania, where between 30 and 40 otters were captured and released in other parts of the commonwealth. Residents in southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania continue to see otters returning to the lower Susquehanna River basin.

A mature male otter weighs up to

25 pounds and is 40 inches in length, plus a 12- to 15-inch tail. Females are slightly smaller.

Studies show that otters prefer to feed on minnows, sunfish, suckers, crayfish and carp. Other foods include frogs, turtles, snails, mussels, snakes and insects. For more information on otters, check the Game Commission's website at **www.pgc.state.pa.us**. Click on "Wildlife," then choose "Wildlife Reference Guide," "Assorted Wildlife Information and Photographs," and "River Otter."

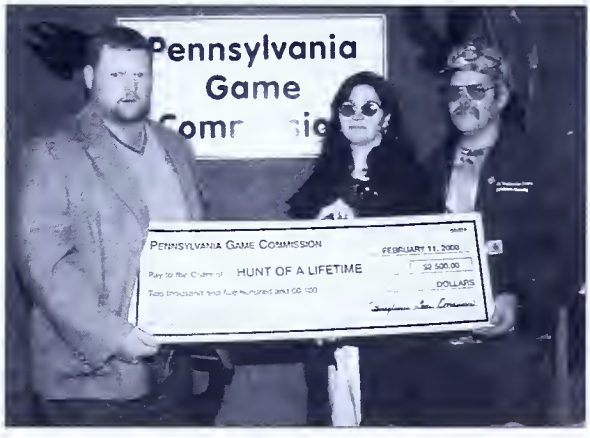
Conservation Leadership School

PENN STATE'S Conservation Leadership School offers students a chance to explore environmental issues not in a classroom, but outside at the university's 7,000-acre Stone Valley Recreation Area just south of State College.

The two-week programs are designed for students 15 to 18 years of age with strong interests in conservation and natural resources. The curriculum covers ecology, watershed and forest management, citizen action, land-use planning, alternative energy supplies and much more. Sessions are June 25-July 8; July 9-22; and the advanced session, July 27-August 5.

Registration is limited. To register or for more information, call 814-865-8301, or write Conservation Leadership School, Pennsylvania State University, 306 Ag Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802-2601, or visit http://conferences.cas.psu.edu.

Hunt of a Lifetime receives $2,500 donation



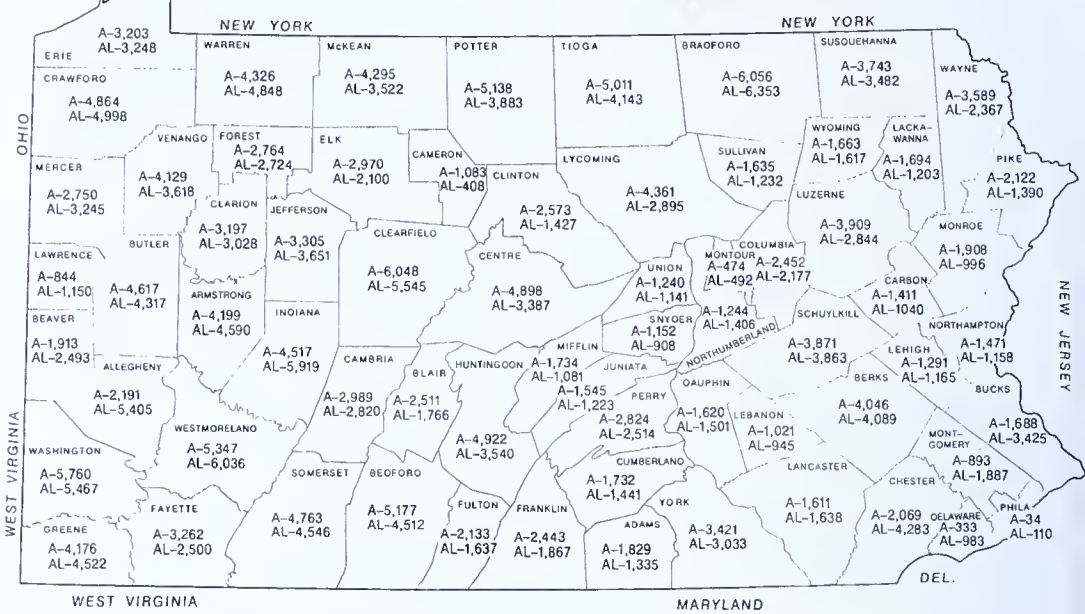
TINA and CHESTER PATTISON, right, accept a $2,500 donation on behalf of "Hunt of a Lifetime" from the Game Commission. Commissioner Stephen Mohr presented the donation during a ceremony at the Eastern Sports and Outdoors Show in Harrisburg.

The Pattisons formed "Hunt of a Lifetime" as a nonprofit corporation to provide hunting and fishing trips to seriously ill children and young adults.

Having lost a son to Hodgkins disease, the Pattisons started Hunt of a Lifetime because they saw how much their son's wish for a moose hunt meant to him, and because they learned that groups that grant such wishes to youngsters suffering from major diseases are refraining from hunts because of pressure from anti-hunting groups.

For more information write Hunt of a Lifetime, 6297 Buffalo Road, Harborcreek, PA 16421 or call 1-800-484-4948-0862.

1999-2000 Deer Harvest



Antlered Deer (A)		Antlerless Deer (AL)	
All season	194,000	All season	184,080
County Unknown	368	County Unknown	144
Total	194,368	Total	184,224

DURING THE 1999-00 season, hunters took 378,592 deer, up slightly from the previous year's harvest of 377,489. This year's antlered (buck) harvest was 194,368, compared to 181,449 in 1998-99. The antlerless (doe) harvest was 184,224, compared to last year's 196,040. Much of the decrease in the antlerless deer harvest can no doubt be attributed to heavy rains during the first two days of the 3-day regular antlerless season.

Of the total number of deer harvested last year, bowhunters took 72,071 (37,709 antlered and 34,362 antlerless), compared to 59,715 (32,334 antlered and 27,381 antlerless) the year before.

Flintlock hunters harvested 13,949 deer (967 antlered and 12,982 antlerless), compared to 9,244 (767 antlered and 8,477 antlerless) in 1998-99. The increase in the flintlock harvest can be at least partly attributed to the regulation change that allowed hunters to obtain flintlock licenses without surrendering their antlerless deer license applications.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

THE MASON-DIXON CHAPTER of the National Wild Turkey Federation recently presented to the Game Commission a Truax grass and grain drill. The drill will be used to develop herbaceous openings to benefit many species of wildlife. The donation, valued at $14,000, was made possible through the NWTF's Super Fund Program. At the presentation ceremony were, standing, PGC Deputy Executive Director Larry Harshaw, Glenn Shaffer and George Airing, of the Mason Dixon Chapter, Representative Bruce Smith, Chairman of the House Game & Fisheries Committee, Bill Laird, of the Pennsylvania Chapter of NWTF. Kneeling are Bruce Metz, Southeast Region Land Management Supervisor, and Rich Skubish, Land Management Officer.





Middle Creek/Pymatuning programs

EXCELLENT informative and entertaining programs are being offered at the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas.

On May 10 & 11, nature enthusiast Dick Warren will present "The Covered Bridges of Lancaster County," in which he will show and discuss the more than 30 covered bridges in the county.

On May 24 & 25, PGC biologist Jerry Hassinger will present "The Value of Wildlife," what's sure to be an entertaining and provocative look at how extremely valuable our wildlife resources are and why we should be more adequately funding wildlife conservation programs.

On June 7 & 8, Scott Weidensaul will present "Living on the Wind: The World of Migratory Birds." Weidensaul's recently published book on bird migration is outstanding, and this program promises to be most informative, one every bird enthusiast will want to attend.

Programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville.

At Pymatuning, on May 6, Brenda Peebles will present a program on bald eagles. On May 13, Mary Ann Hoffman will present "Art and Ecology: The Native American Mounds of the Region." On May 20, wildlife conservation officers will discuss the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the role of a Pennsylvania wildlife conservation officer. Then, on May 27, learn how to take award winning photographs. Techniques, equipment, film and accessories for taking 35mm still photography will be explored.

Pymatuning programs are free and begin at 2 p.m. The visitors center is located near Linesville.

Outdoor Heritage 2000 on tap

ON MAY 5 and 6, the Game Commission and the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation are hosting Outdoor Heritage 2000. Being held at the Huntingdon County Fair Grounds, OH2 will highlight hunting and trapping, and the mining, farming and steel industries that helped shape the culture of southwestern Pennsylvania.

"We have developed partnerships that will provide outstanding education experiences for every attendee," said Scott Stuttard, Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation marketing director. "With 'The Nature of Heritage' as our theme, this presents an excellent venture in an educational format."

Simple Gifts, an award-winning folk music trio from State College, will be performing music that draws on a variety of ethnic folk styles, including lively Irish jigs and down-home American reels, as well as haunting gypsy melodies. The group spices up the mix with the distinctive rhythms of Balkan dance music, the lush sounds of Scandinavian twin fiddling, and original compositions written in traditional style.

Visitors also will be able to view reenactors depicting the styles and ways of life from various periods of history, including early settlers and the Civil War era. A fashion show is planned on both days, as well as living history encampments.

"The Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation, the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association and all of the OH2 sponsors are playing a vital role in telling the story of Pennsylvania's past," said Vern Ross, Commission Executive Director. "I'm pleased that the Game Commission's Southcentral Region Office, and specifically Don Garner, are participating to make OH2 an outstanding educational event for all."

The Game Commission Southcentral Region Office and Lowe's stores of Central Pennsylvania are partnering to provide bluebird box kits for youngsters who visit "Outdoor Heritage 2000," on Friday, May 5.

"We try to help students, schools and communities in our area, and the Central Pennsylvania stores thought donating lumber would be a perfect way to show our support for Outdoor Heritage 2000," said Jim Michaels, Lowe's Altoona store manager.

"Every youngster who attends OH2 will learn something new," said Don Garner, PGC Southcentral Region Information and Education Supervisor. "We plan to provide all visitors with a unique view of Pennsylvania's wildlife, and we especially want to provide children with something they can take home to continue their outdoor learning."

Activities begin at 9 a.m. each day. The event features more than 200 booths and demonstrations by the region's best heritage attractions, natural resource groups, craftsmen and artisans.

For more information about OH2, contact the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation at 814-696-9380; or the OH2 coordinator at the Game Commission's Southcentral Region Office at 814-643-1831 or toll-free at 1-877-877-9107.

Hunting's true satisfaction and allure are in the doing, not in what the hunter puts, or doesn't put, in his game bag. And that sets the stage for . . .

Little Rituals

A WILD turkey gobbler enters the sunlit forest clearing. At the soft cluck of a hen, he pauses, stiffens and literally expands. Those who are near might hear a low-pitched *thrum-m-m-m-m-m* as he swells his chest and the dark feathers spread to frame his beard. He curves his neck and tucks in his head. The crimson and pale blue of his wattles and crown are bright against the black and copper glory of the upright tail fan. His zebra-striped wings are stretched taut, dragging the ground as he struts. The gobbler walks a step or two this way, then turns, quivering, at full display for the hen — or hunter — that called him in.



Linda Steiner

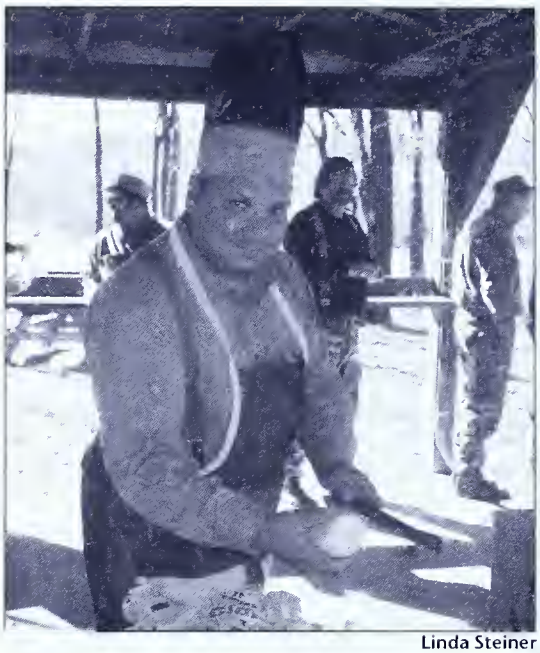
THE FALL turkey season opening day lunch gang doesn't let a little snow keep them from their ritual picnic.

Call it parade; call it posturing; call it dance. This is the wild turkey's spring ritual.

The hunter who may be sitting so still against a nearby tree, shotgun at the ready, is as much a practitioner of ritual as the gobbler. He probably doesn't call it ritual; there are just things he does, always does, given the same circumstances. That is the essence of ritual, and hunting is rife with it.

According to Webster, one meaning of ritual is "the established form for a ceremony." With a tip of the hat to the writer who has gone there before, hunting itself has been described not as a sport or recreation, but as a ritual. Much of the purpose and meaning of a ritual is embodied in its practice; they can't be separated. Hunting isn't so much about goals as about a structured performance. Hunting's true satisfaction and allure are in the doing, not in what the hunter puts, or doesn't put, in his game bag. And that is akin to ritual.

Heady stuff lies at the heart of hunting. But there is a lighter side. Hunting also has many little details of ritual, some that outsiders may think silly. The form that the ceremony, the performance of the hunt, takes varies from person to person, between hunting buddies and groups, and even from region to region.



Linda Steiner

CHEF for the traditional fall turkey season opening day lunch is Dave O'Lear of Greensburg, wearing his ceremonial blaze orange and camouflage hat and apron.

These differences in ritual, which become tradition with continued use, may show up in the disparity in hunting laws from state to state, especially where the social side, not the wildlife conservation or safety aspect, determines practice. Certainly a wild turkey can be killed in the spring with any number of calibers of rifles, but long-standing tradition has limited it to the shotgun. Hunting a gobbler in May with a .222 isn't just against the law; it's against the basic tenets of the vernal wildlife ritual.

In my group, hunting ritual displays a simpler form, sometimes even covering the form. Hunting clothes are ritualized for most of us. In my closets and drawers I have clothes, from underwear to outerwear, that I use only during hunting season. Perhaps it's just that my set of fleece long johns is so comfy, that a certain orange hat and gloves are so insulated, and that my orange coveralls fit so well, but I know it's more than that. I know what the ceremony of my hunt requires I wear, as much as any native dancer who dons a formalized pattern of paint and feathers for his own culture's rituals. When I'm dressed in the same outfit that I wore last deer season, I know not only mentally but have a deep-down feeling that I am ready for the hunt.

One hunting friend calls her orange jacket and overalls her "hunting uniform." I thought this was a funny term, but now see its aptness. She always wears the outfit for deer season; she wouldn't think of going deer hunting without it. In some small way, it might even bring her luck — she has confidence she'll see deer and her shots will connect when she's wearing her "uniform." If clothes make the man, they may also make the hunter; we are what we think we are and often what we dress like.

This can go too far, though. Another buddy wears his black-and-red plaid wool hunting pants and coat (with orange vest) for every buck and doe season. It's his "deer huntin' suit" (he always drops the "g"), and he's in it whatever the weather, 70 degrees and sunny, zero degrees and windy, blowing rain and in the 40s. He says he wears it because "when the one day of the year comes that I'm dressed right, I'll be ready for it." We all laugh. I have a suspicion that the adherence to the old-pattern Woolrich is a ritual based on family practice and a yearning to keep the lore of the old-time woodsman alive.

In fall turkey season, my group has a ritual opening day lunch. It started through the generosity of a couple of our friends, as thanks for my husband and me hosting them for several days of hunting. Everyone who is out with us is welcome to share in the repast, it's that bountiful. The ritual has evolved, as ceremonies will, from a tailgate party, with lunch out of coolers in the back of a SUV, to a folding table set up in a game lands parking lot, to everyone arriving at noon at a picnic pavilion at a nearby park.

No matter whether turkeys are seen, heard and shot, or not, we all can count on the traditional Fall Turkey Opener Lunch. Now we have picnic tables to cook

and eat on, a place out of the rain and snow, three camp stoves and a coffee pot going, plus our own turkey flag. Another friend gave us a Thanksgiving house banner, and we fly it from the roof edge of our pavilion, as a part of the ritual. The two self-appointed cooks have their own ceremonial garb now: a camouflage and blaze orange apron, chef's hat and oven mitts that a buddy had a seamstress friend make for the occasion.

At the lunch, turkeys that were shot that morning are gotten out of trunks and displayed and photos are taken. With the overlap in seasons, bowhunters are welcome, too. This past year an 8-point was the noontime hit. Friends and relatives come from across Pennsylvania, even from out-of-state, for the start of fall turkey season; I think mostly for the midday picnic. We joke about our "catered lunch" on opening day, but we're not exaggerating that much. To our gang, without the event, the season would scarcely seem official.

Another hunting group I know, an uncle who likes to cook and his hungry nephews, does something similar for the start of buck season. "I love opening day of deer hunting," one of the nephews told me. I thought he was going to expound on the thrill of seeing deer, about the excitement of getting a shot, but I was wrong. "It's great to sit in the woods, the sun just peeking over the hill, and smell the bacon Uncle Pete is frying. Then about 9 o'clock we all go back to the truck and he cooks up eggs and pancakes and we stand around eating. I wouldn't miss opening morning for anything." I never did hear of many bucks this group bagged, but the ritual of buck-day breakfast keeps the family coming back for more.

I like to watch our hunting group making sandwiches for opening day. They make the same kind every year, a sort of just-before-bedtime ceremony. Some always have ham and Swiss and mustard, or fried egg and peppers. One takes two peanut butters on rye, another packs "jumbo" (bologna) on white bread, with ketchup and butter. Lately I've taken to lunching on granola bars, an apple and a couple of boxes of juice. My brother-in-law takes Snickers and oranges. Accompaniments to the lunches include beef jerky, pepperoni, special cookies or cheese sticks. Some must have tea, heavily sugared, coffee or hot chocolate for their Thermos bottles. I doubt any of our hunters eat these foods in this combination any other time of year, but they absolutely must have them for their hunt to be "right."

The rituals go on and on. Opening day hunters do not so much have special hotspots as special spots. Many begin their season in the same place, sitting in the same stand, on the same rock or leaning against the same tree, every year. This is their accustomed seat for the overture, and they

Bob D'Angelo



HUNTERS do not so much have special hotspots as special spots. Many go down the same road to begin their season in the same place, on the same rock or leaning against the same tree, every year.

must be in place when the first note is sounded. Many hunters stop for opening morning breakfast at the same diner year after year, although this is the only day they eat there. Menus for supper before opening day and dinner at the end of opening day are often ceremonial. I think there's an unwritten law that chili must be served in every hunting camp.

Ritual in hunting goes beyond the methods we use to seek game, the structured doing that is the quest for a killing shot. Ritual in hunting filters down to details, including frivolous ones, like what we wear and what we eat. These minimal and mundane activities are part of the overall process that in total becomes our hunt. If we deviate from the rituals we've established, no matter how accidentally they came to be, we become uncomfortable, feel we've jinxed ourselves. This is illogical, but then good or bad luck always is. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Should You Help?

How can you help wildlife? Choose the correct answer and place the letter in the space provided, then see what it spells.

____ When an injured animal is found A) pick it up immediately; D) call your area's wildlife rehabilitator; M) corner it and watch its movements.

____ Rabie-vector species include T) raccoons; B) foxes; E) bats; O) all of these.

____ Baby rabbits can fend for themselves once H) they have hair; A) they can squeal; N) their eyes are open.

____ Handling young wildlife unnecessarily increases Y) their lifespan; E) the opportunity for taming; O) their stress level, sometimes resulting in death.

____ If baby animals, such as rabbits, are caught, release them V) anywhere; C) in similar habitat; T) as close as possible to the same place where they were found.

____ People responsible for caring for wildlife in Pennsylvania are called G) wildlife rescuers; T) wildlife rehabilitators; X) wildlife conservation officers.

____ Until help arrives, place a A) cardboard box; J) basket; R) crate; O) any of these over the injured bird or animal.

____ Wildlife stands a better chance for survival T) in confinement; U) in the wild.

____ Rabies is spread by I) touch only; L) bites only; C) through the saliva.

____ It's unlawful to I) make pets of wildlife; C) treat injured wildlife unless licensed; R) capture and raise young wildlife; H) all of these.

Common sense says, "_____ _____ _____."

answers on p. 64

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Gobbler season, planting food plots and trees on game lands and repairing equipment are just some of the activities going on during this busy month.

MAY IS A TIME of celebration and observance for May Day, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day, May Queens and the May Apple; symbolic for a month of spring freshness and growth.

Here in Pennsylvania, May usually marks the start of spring gobbler season. Since its inception in 1968, this season has proven to be extremely popular and an exceptional time to be outdoors. As with most changes or new concepts, the creation of this season was a hot topic, creating many debates at the time. Many sportsmen assumed a spring season would be the end of the turkey population we all worked so hard to build. Then, as well as now, the impacts were thoroughly investigated and scientific predictions were made before the proposal became an actual season. Game Commission biologists have a pretty good idea of what impacts new seasons will have on wildlife populations before they happen.



CLARION COUNTY Food & Cover crew preparing game lands food plot for planting.

Today, spring hunting opportunities abound in the Northwest Region, as there seems to be turkeys in every woodlot

Week One

While patrolling on the first day of the season, I notice a hunter come out of a woodlot and walk toward a camp. He's carrying a turkey, so I stop to perform a field check and gather some data on his bird. As I approach, the man kneels down with his orange vest off. When I get up to him I see that the turkey is not tagged, and he is struggling to get his license out of its holder. He looks at me and says that the licenses are made too large for the holders. I asked him if that is why he didn't tag the bird where he had killed it. He shook his head and half-smiling said, "Yeah, and I didn't have a pencil."

I explained that he had made no attempt to comply with the law, by not even attaching his tag, or using a knife point, stick or license holder pin to scratch the information on the tag. After a short discussion, review of the entire situation, and a thorough explanation of the intent of the law, I left him with some paperwork. I checked many hunters during the day, and was pleased with the overall compliance of the fluorescent orange regulations.

Some of the Food & Cover crew have been plowing food plots for our spring



MAST PRODUCING trees planted in tubes at a gas well site on state game lands in Jefferson County.

planting. We start to plow as soon as the weather permits, so we can get a jump on the season. Most of our plots are small, under five acres, and scattered across game lands. This is good for wildlife but causes us to spend a lot of travel time transporting equipment from plot to plot, and from game lands to game lands. This spring we will seed 130 acres of food plots in my group. We will be seeding 58 acres of grain and 72 acres of grasses and legumes. The type of seed we use in an area depends upon the location of the plot, soil type, and what habitat element we want to enhance (to provide food or cover). As an example, we will be creating a grassy food strip on a road that runs through a wooded area. We chose to plant a mixture of clover and Kentucky bluegrass, with a cover crop of ryegrass. This mixture grows well in early spring when wildlife need it, and will hold up under light vehicle traffic. The bluegrass and clover will provide early green nutrition for grouse, deer and turkeys, and the clover and ryegrass will provide a haven for insects. Insects are important for turkey, grouse, and many other species of birds as they grow.

This grassy road strip ends at a 2-acre food plot, which will be seeded to a mixture of corn and the Game Commission's food plot mix, which includes sorghum, buckwheat, millet and sunflower. In this area, we have found these grain mixes to be better than pure stands of grain. It seems the deer on game lands are able to consume entire stands of corn, buckwheat and sunflower before they get three inches tall, but when we plant these in mixes, the deer damage is minimal. This combination of grains provides food and cover for many species of wildlife, even through the winter. The following summer, the plots will be mowed and re-seeded to winter wheat. The following spring they will be seeded to a grass and legume mix. This rotation provides wildlife with diversity and a good source of nutrition for several years.

Week Two

While checking hunters in Jefferson County, I'm surprised to see heavy equipment moving onto a gas line that runs through game lands. It seems they are preparing to start some maintenance activities in a popular hunting area. I stop and introduce myself to the foreman and explain that it is the second week of spring gobbler season. I tell him that running heavy equipment in this area will prevent sportsmen from hunting here. As we are talking — and as if on cue — a nearby tom cuts loose with a loud gobble. The foreman looks at me and says, "I see what you mean, I should have brought my gun." It turned out that the company was willing to postpone this work for a couple of weeks. Most utility companies are concerned about their impact upon wildlife and sportsmen. In this case, the person who planned the work wasn't a hunter, and that a hunting season might be going on never occurred to him.

As some of the crew are off plowing and planting food plots, the rest of the crew and I have been busy planting the seedlings we

received last month from Howard Nursery. Most of trees are conifers, spruce and pine we are planting for winter cover. In some areas we are planting beneath existing larger trees that will be cut next winter. This will provide sunlight and protection for our new seedlings, as well as deer browse and brushy cover for wildlife.

When that's completed, we finish our planting by planting mast trees and shrubs (crabapple, hawthorn, dogwood and honeysuckle for soft mast, and sawtooth oak, scrub oak, chestnut and hazelnut for hard mast) around existing gas well sites on our game lands. On some game lands, well sites are the only existing open grassy areas, which most species of wildlife need. They also provide a place where sunlight can hit the ground. If we plant our trees and shrubs on the north side of a well site, we can be assured these new seedlings get a southern exposure. Because of deer, we enclose these seedlings in "tree tubes" to protect them and help them grow. This is labor intensive, but a necessity because of the deer.

On some of the seedlings we planted last year, we found that bears like to knock them around and bite them, and that porcupines like to chew the black plastic wire ties we use to secure the tree tubes to the metal stakes in the ground. Despite the deer, bears and porcupines, our seedlings have a pretty good survival rate.

In the evening, Clarion County foreman Gary Maxwell, retired Jefferson County foreman Joe Snyder and I meet with a group of scouts to help plant seedlings on SGL 74 near Strattonville. I enjoy working with kids and am surprised that so many parents also attend to spend time with their kids and do something for wildlife. I would like to thank the crews, WCOs, deputies, landowners, scout groups, and sportsman's clubs for helping to make our seedling program run smoothly.

My wife, Suzanne, and I attend the annual Clarion County Federation of Sportsman's Club banquet at the Salem Community Building. Following an excellent meal by the Township Recreation Board staff and a presentation by WCO Al Scott, Dr Pete Dalby received a Conservation Award. Pete has donated many hours and has accomplished many things for area sportsmen.

Week Three

With tree planting behind us, the crews go full swing into farming. I'm thankful our equipment is holding up. I meet with landowners about a boundary line complaint on SGL 63. I explain that because there's not always a tree growing right on the line, we paint the closest trees on both sides. Once I show them that the line falls between the two rows of painted trees, they understand what we're doing. Our survey crews are meticulous in their research and pride themselves on being accurate.

I present a slide program to the Punxsutawney "Gobblers Knob" chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. This is a new chapter and the members are interested in turkey habitat work. Through this program, I show and explain some of the habitat work we accomplish on game lands that benefit wild turkeys. After answering some questions and general discussion it's 10 p.m. when the meeting breaks up. A 45-minute ride home, and I find my kids are in bed. Having left at 6:30 that morning, I didn't see them at all today.

The following day I attend a meeting at Clarion University about grassland bird habitats. The university has been conducting studies on the nesting habits of species such as the Henslow's sparrow, found locally on the large grass savannas created through strip mine reclamation. Strip mining in our area has created this rare habitat, some of which has been identified as an important birding area by the Ornithological Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Society. These grasslands support Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows, short-eared owls, bobolink, dickcissel and many other species of birds. A large percentage of these areas, however,

are reverting back to shrub and tree cover. The question now is do we allow these areas to become re-forested through natural progression, or do we keep these areas in grasslands? How will this impact other species and land use? It's like deer management, it depends on who and when you ask. There are no easy answers.

The end of the week brings trouble. We have a break-in at a storage building and lose some seed and fertilizer; the above ground fuel tank alarms go off in the middle of the night; and one of our tractors starts to run badly. After an investigation by the State Police, we replace the stolen seed and fertilizer. Farm Game Manager Tom Deitz discovers it was a false alarm, and thanks to our crew members Everett, Lee and Dave, the tractor is repaired.



"WILDLIFE HABITATS" station at Clear Creek State Park during Brockway Sixth Grade Day.

Week Four

Hunting pressure is almost non-existent, except for a few guys hitting the woods before work. It has been a good season with many nice birds taken. I assist WCO Roger Hartless look for an individual known to have killed one gobbler out hunting for second, but we don't find him.

The Jefferson County crew is behind in their spring planting, due to having one tractor down. This tractor is 30 years old, so a certain amount of down time is to be expected, but it's still frustrating when we can't stay on schedule. The Clarion crew takes a day off from farming to repair their finishing discs, and to make some needed repairs to the shooting range on SGL 72. The crew routinely replaces the backboards and frames and cleans up an incredible amount of debris left there. More users need to be reminded that only paper targets are permissible. People shooting glass bottles and other such targets are violating the law and create a real problem, as we need to drive on the range to replace the backing materials as well as keep the grass mowed.

Thursday finds me helping WCO Roger Hartless, WCO Mike Girosky, WES Rich Cramer, WCO Rick Valazak, the Jefferson Conservation District, Heath Twp. Sportsman's Club, NRCS, as well as other groups and agencies at the annual Brockway Sixth Grade Days. This day brings all sixth grade kids from the Brockway School to Clear Creek State Park for a day of outdoor learning. The kids are divided into small groups and attend different stations in a round-robin format. The station I'm conducting is called "wildlife habitats." I explain to the kids what habitat is and what wild animals need to survive. Some of the other stations include Pennsylvania big game, songbirds, water quality, fish and soils. This is a wonderful event and goes back to when the Ross Leffler School of Conservation was located near Brockway. I wish more schools would take advantage of these types of programs.

The end of the month means a day of doing paperwork for me, the farm game manager and foremen. The mountain of paperwork on my desk is large, not to mention the phone calls I need to return and the bills that need processing. Although I would rather not be doing paperwork, I realize that it's the paperwork that justifies all that we do and, through this process, allows us to receive the funding we need to accomplish more habitat work. □

Well known writer and PGC biologist Roger Latham had an ingenious idea back in the late 1940s that has become a tool for modern deer management in Pennsylvania.

Latham's Acre

LAND MANAGEMENT OFFICER John Dzemyan is a man with a mission. He wants every hunter in Pennsylvania to see his 150 deer exclosures on state game lands in McKean and Elk counties. Only then will they understand the terrific damage an overabundant deer herd does to the forest, a forest that sustains not only deer but also bears, grouse, turkeys, songbirds and a host of other wild animals.

Dzemyan became a proselytizer when he was a WCO in southeastern McKean County. There he first saw the last remaining Latham fence on SGL 30. One of many built by Roger Latham and Stan Forbes back in 1949; it encloses one acre of rugged, mountaintop forest. For 50 years, all deer have been kept out of that acre, hence the term exclosure. Dzemyan could scarcely believe the difference between Latham's acre, as it was called, and the surrounding forest.

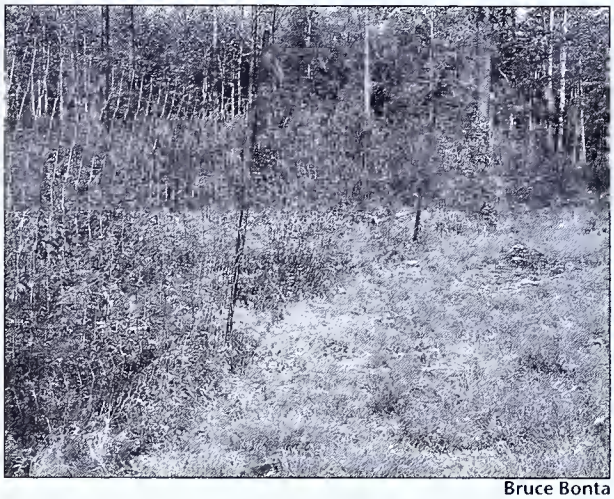
Neither could we. My husband Bruce and I stood on top of Dividing Ridge on a cool day in mid-May. The only sound we heard atop that remote mountain was the song of a black-throated green warbler. At 2,300 feet in northcentral Pennsylvania's big woods, we were not surprised by the forest understory of hay-scented ferns, striped maples and a few white violets. Even though it was the peak of spring wildflowers, we were used to seeing the greatest number and diversity of wildflowers and shrubs in lower, wet areas, including along our own hollow stream. Mountaintops don't grow many wildflowers, we thought.

Then we entered Latham's acre. It was like stepping into a lost world, a world filled with wildflowers, shrubs

Bruce Bonta



LMO JOHN DZEMYAN points out to Marcia Bonta the regeneration of vegetation that has taken place in a deer exclosure on SGL 44 in Elk County.



Bruce Bonta

THE AREA outside the deer exclosure looks like a virtual desert, while inside there's a diversity of wildflowers, shrubs and trees. It will take many years with much smaller deer herds before the Big Woods region of Pennsylvania recovers.

and saplings rarely seen in much of Pennsylvania's wild lands. Thick beds of Canada mayflower, Solomon's seal, round-leaved violets, partridgeberry, white baneberry, Indian cucumber-root, red and painted trilliums, and jack-in-the-pulpits blanketed the forest floor. Alternate-leaved dogwood and red elderberry shrubs, as well as tree saplings of many species, such as black birch, sugar maple, shadbush, black cherry and American beech, occupied the understory. The vegetation was so thick that we could barely see from one end of the acre to the other. The middle canopy, which has been eliminated from many of Pennsylvania's forests by too many deer, was especially impressive. This is the area, researchers have found, where most of our neotropical migrant songbirds, such as wood thrushes, rose-breasted grosbeaks and black-throated blue warblers nest and feed.

From there, Dzemyan took us to a nearby small, narrow fence eight feet long and four feet high that he had built to save multiflora rose and autumn olive plantings from deer. I was aghast. In many parts of Pennsylvania, these alien species, once planted as wildlife food, have become rampant pests, crowding out native plants, and folks are using herbicides to get rid of them. But in northcentral Pennsylvania, even these aliens can't make it.

To reinforce the impression made by those fences, Dzemyan took us to visit several more exclosures he had had built on SGL 44 in Elk County. Using the labor of Pennsylvania's Conservation Corps, under the auspices of Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry, he has had all shapes and sizes of fences erected. "I just randomly pick spots," he told us. And each time he seems to get a different mix of trees, shrubs and wildflowers, clear evidence of the former diversity in these forests.

Half of one fenced clearcut came back to aspen, because it grows so fast. Because deer relish it, aspen rarely has a chance to regenerate in an unfenced area. Inside another small fence, a wild azalea shrub and white oak sapling appeared. The wild azalea surprised Dzemyan, but he subsequently found them inside other fences. "I didn't know they grew around here," he said.

Pin cherry, a first successional tree, came up quickly and thickly in other exclosures, preventing a hay-scented fern monoculture from covering the forest floor, as it does in many places after a clearcut, and shading out tree seedlings.

On a steep slope that had been fenced, he proudly pointed out mountain laurel, hemlocks, teaberry and partridgeberry coming back. Outside the fence the ground was bare.

"I find it hard to believe that they even eat mountain laurel, teaberry and partridgeberry," I commented. "Our Laurel Ridge is covered with them."

"I tell people that deer eat everything but rocks, and they will even eat those if there's nothing else around," Dzemyan joked.

Behind another fence he showed off wild grapevines and blackberry bushes.

"Deer have eliminated blackberry up here," he said.

Deer also relish mountain ash. Dzemyan planted a large opening with them, and those he fenced covered the land. Those without protection were quickly eaten.

His favorite place to take hunters is a plot beside Route 949 that is complete with explanatory signboards. Anyone can stop, read the signs, then look at the area. It had been clearcut in 1989, and no regeneration followed. So, in 1996 Dzemyan had seven 20- x 20-foot areas fenced. He wanted to demonstrate how much would regenerate after six years. Then, he had another, larger area cut again. He fenced that in the spring of 1997. Both areas are regenerating nicely.

Probably his most impressive demonstration area is on top of the mountain near Brockway. In 1996 half of a 6-acre clearcut was fenced to exclude deer; the other half was left open. Inside the fence, stump sprouts had sprung up and grown vigorously. Outside the fence, the same number of sprouts were browsed to the ground. Deer love stump sprouts because they are more nutritious, having gotten their nutrients from the root system of a mature tree.

The variety of trees coming up inside the fence was amazing: several oak species, maples, cucumber magnolias, sassafras, black cherry and shadbush, among others. Dewberry, teaberry and partridgeberry covered the ground. We even found a few painted trilliums. Outside the exclosure, only isolated clumps of grass grew.

Walking along the outside of the 8-foot woven wire fence, Dzemyan pointed out an 18-inch dead zone inside the fence — as far as deer can stick their mouths in to eat. He told us that after he shows this plot to people, "Nineteen out of 20 say that every deer hunter in the state should come here." Dzemyan, himself, is an avid deer hunter, and his message to hunters is that poor habitat cannot support a healthy deer herd. To clinch his argument, he shows off two sets of antlers. The 10-point rack was so enormous I thought it belonged to an elk. The other was a more "normal" deer rack, the kind usually seen throughout Pennsylvania. According to Dzemyan, both racks belonged to a local, recently deceased older hunter who had been killing deer in the same area all his life. The large rack came from a buck he had shot when the habitat was still good. The small rack was from a buck he had shot many years later, when the habitat was poor.

Bruce Bonta



RARE SIGHTINGS outside the deer exclosures in the Northcentral Region — jack-in-the-pulpit and Canada mayflower.

Furthermore, Dzemyan asserted, "Deer are affecting the habitat for other animals." To illustrate this he tells visitors about a mother bear and three cubs he discovered denning on a nearby clearcut. He had them all tagged by wildlife biologists. Two were later shot in Clarion County, where there are plenty of blackberries. "They had gone that far to find food," he concludes.

By the end of the day we had seen more exclosures than we thought possible. Not quite the 150 Dzemyan is responsible for, but a dizzying number nonetheless. We were impressed by the diversity of wildflowers, shrubs and trees that had germinated in the protected areas, proof that the seed

The Game Commission plans to build exclosures in every county. In the meantime, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has built a one-acre exclosure and two smaller ones in Cook Forest State Park along the Cook Nature Trail, one mile upstream from Cooksburg in Jefferson County. They will be studying the effects of deer feeding in old-growth forests. They also want to educate the public, so the area features signs that define old growth forests, explain their reasons for fencing, and provide forestry information to park visitors. They plan to update these signs annually based on the information they gain from the ongoing study. It will probably be four years before there is much change in the exclosures, but it is certainly worth watching, especially if you live near the park.

source was still there. But because the damage has been going on for many decades, when the deer herd was much higher (60 to 70 per forested square mile in many places), it will take many years, with much reduced deer herds, before the big woods will recover.

Of course, the alternative would be to continually clearcut the northern part of the state, as was done at the turn of the century, and keep it in the brushy condition that supports the largest number of deer. In the absence of that ridiculous alternative, a smaller deer herd, 10 to 20 per forested square mile, is necessary to retain all the components of a healthy forest.

Our own small exclosure (16- x 16-foot) has been slower than Dzemyan's to show results, because our property and neighboring properties have a wide diversity of forest and field habitats, everything from recent clearcuts to mature oak and black cherry forests producing heavy mast crops. Still, in some portions of our forest, we can see a clear browse line where there is no foliage below four to five feet.

Near our Far Field, along Far Field Road, we built our exclosure in the spring of 1995. For three years, we felt a little foolish about it. The same striped maple and red maple seedlings outside the fence sprang up inside the fence. Then, in the fall of 1998, I noticed new plants on the forest floor. A couple large Solomon seal wildflowers displayed deep blue berries amid a thick blanket of Canada mayflower leaves. I had never seen either wildflower growing on top of our dry mountaintop and had assumed they liked only the steep, moist banks of our hollow road and stream where they thrived.

Could they be favorite deer food? Last spring I watched the exclosure and its surroundings more carefully. Both Canada mayflowers and Solomon's seal germinated outside and inside the fence. But within a month, those outside the fence had disappeared while those inside blossomed and set seed.

I also discovered the 18-inch phenomenon we had observed inside Dzemyan's exclosure where several of our Solomon's seals had been nipped off.

Now we are eager to build more exclosures in different habitats. Who knows what seed sources still exist in our soil, waiting to be released. Perhaps more round-leaved orchids, such as the one we found one spring at the Far Field and fenced the following year after the first flower stem had been nipped off by deer. Or maybe the nodding ladies' tresses I discovered one September and watched expand the next year before deer ate them all, will return.

Fortunately, the folks who hunt on our land understand the necessity of keeping the deer herd in balance with a healthy forest, so they hunt not only bucks but does. They know, in the words of Dzemyan, that "wildlife populations revolve around and depend upon habitat like the earth does the sun." Without a wide variety of wildflowers, vines, shrubs and trees, not only deer, but all the other animals of the forest will suffer. □

It's hard to teach an old dog new tricks, so getting those young "pups" in the archery game started out right will go a long way in developing dedicated and successful shooters and hunters.

It's Never too Early to Start

ARCHERY is not just a great sport, it's what I refer to as a universal sport. Everyone can enjoy archery in one form or another, regardless of his or her age or physical condition. You are never too old or too young to take up the sport.



While archery has a natural attraction for everyone, it's especially appealing to youngsters. If you have ever had a youngster watch you shoot your bow, you know it isn't long until he or she asks, "Can I try?"

When most of us think about archery we naturally think about bowhunting. And while bowhunting is a great activity, you don't have to be a hunter to enjoy archery. When it comes to youngsters, they can learn to shoot a bow years before they are ready to go hunting — if they decide to go hunting at all. Archery is an excellent way for a family to spend time together, or for a group of adults and youngsters to enjoy a sport in which age is not a factor. Time does fly, as we all know too well — and often too late — so if you have a young archer or potential bowhunter in your household, it's never too early to start thinking about introducing them to the bow and arrow.

During the nine years my wife and I ran a professional archery shop, we had the pleasure of outfitting many young archers.

RANDY ROMANI of Archers and Anglers based in Everett, introduces a young Cub Scout to the archery game.

Many of those young "Robin Hoods" went on to become the core of today's bowhunters, dedicated not only to bowhunting, but also to the preservation of the environment. Others who never took up bowhunting continue to enjoy the sport through target shooting, just for the thrill of watching an arrow in flight strike a distant target. Unfortunately, I have all too often seen a young archer's interest and enthusiasm turn to frustration when they are given equipment that doesn't fit them. Like many things in life, how you start is often the most important part. Getting a youngster off to the proper start in archery often requires no more than a little thought and some common sense.

Many archers knowledgeable about equipment for themselves have no idea how to outfit their young son or daughter. One of the basic mistakes made is the hand-me-down approach. Giving adult size equipment to a youngster often severely limits the child's efforts. Bows that are too heavy or too long, and arrows that are not matched to the bow weight and draw length are difficult for a child to use and result in poor shooting. This in turn tends to discourage the new shooter and often results in them giving up before they've given themselves a chance. With the advances made in archery equipment over the past several years, economical equipment is now available to fit anyone who has an interest in archery. Let's look at the steps in properly outfitting a new young shooter.

The Bow

Many bows designed for youngsters are available from several of the leading archery manufacturers. These come in both conventional and compound styles. Conventional bows (non-compound models) are often well suited for children seven and under. The basic advantages of the conventional style bow are that it adapts well to a variety of draw lengths — easily accommodating a growing shooter — is simple in design, inexpensive, and holds up well under the less than loving care it might receive from a young shooter. The next step up is, of course, the compound bow. These are offered in a variety of draw lengths, draw weights and price ranges.

While a compound must be fitted to each individual, the young growing shooter has special needs. For a youngster, the bow must be of the proper draw length and weight range for the shooter to use at the current time and as the shooter grows, when increases in draw length and strength will need to be considered. As compounds are adjustable in both draw length and bow weight, the bow should be purchased on the low end of both ranges. This allows for the increase in both draw weight and draw length as the shooter grows.

As complicated as this may sound, several manufacturers offer compound bow models that are specifically designed to "grow" with a young shooter. Not only are they adjustable, but they are also designed to allow for the interchangeability of wheel and cable assemblies that will move the shooter from one complete adjustment range to another. As an example, one model can be purchased with a draw length adjustment of 19 to 22 inches and a draw weight of 15 to 30 pounds. Once the shooter has outgrown that range, the bow can be upgraded to a draw length of 24 to 28 inches and a draw weight of 30 to 40 pounds, by simply purchasing a different wheel and cable assembly. This allows the bow to grow with the shooter over several years. Don't think these bows are junk; they are well designed, and although relatively inexpensive, perform well on both the range and in the field.

Arrows

Arrows come in a variety of materials such as wood, aluminum, carbon, fiberglass and combinations of some of these materials. Arrows within these material groups also come in a variety of quality and price ranges. The major considerations to be made when selecting arrows for younger

shooters are cost, durability and safety. Wooden arrows, while often the cheapest, can present an element of danger. In the event a wooden arrow develops a crack, that area becomes a weak spot in the shaft. That arrow could splinter while being shot and cause harm to the shooter. Fiberglass, carbon and aluminum are better choices.

Carbon arrows are normally considered too expensive for use by most young shooters. Fiberglass or aluminum, therefore, may be better choices. Fiberglass arrows are durable and can withstand hard abuse, but can be heavy when used with lighter weight bows. Inexpensive aluminum arrows make a good all around choice, but expect some bending to occur. The spine or stiffness of the arrow must be matched to the bow weight being used.

Arrow length is another matter. Cutting off the arrows to the exact draw length means our shooter will soon outgrow them. Leaving the arrow three inches longer than necessary will only slightly affect the performance of the bow, while allowing the arrows to be used for a longer period of time, as the shooter's draw length increases. Arrow lengths longer than three inches beyond the required draw length have an adverse effect of the bow's performance and are, therefore, not recommended.

Accessories

While the bow and arrows are the primary concerns for a youngster's archery outfit, some additional accessories are required and others can be added as the shooter progresses. Although bows specifically designed and priced for the younger shooter are available, accessories are another story. Archery accessories are available in a variety of styles and price ranges. When outfitting a youngster's bow, remember that while you may not want to buy the top of the line, a good quality accessory can serve the shooter for many years and be installed or used with an upgraded or new bow.

Less is normally better, keep the outfit simple, with a minimum of things to worry about or go wrong. Remember that the goal is for the new shooter to have fun. The simpler it is for them to shoot, the more fun they will have. Draw checks, string peeps, kisser buttons, scopes and the like are fine to add as the shooter gains experience, but for a beginner, they're a bit much. This normally detracts their attention from their shooting form, the shot itself and from having fun. Remember that if started off properly, youngsters are more likely to continue in the sport.

Let's review some of the accessories that should be considered in getting started. An arm guard is necessary to prevent the bowstring from stinging the forearm, a side quiver of some type to hold the arrows, and a finger tab will be needed if the shooter is going to shoot with fingers, otherwise a mechanical release aid will be needed. When choosing a release aid, a good quality low cost release is fine. There is no need at



JOHN EICHER shows excellent form for a young archer. Getting a proper start as a youngster will go a long way in ensuring that a young shooter can enjoy and share the sport with others for a long time.

this time to buy a top of the line release. Do consider the physical size of the release. Small releases are available that better fit small hands and wrists.

While some archers shoot instinctively (without sights), the majority use a sight of some type. A beginning sight should be simple and easy to adjust. If you choose a hunting sight with multiple pins, it's normally best to remove all but one of the pins for a new archer. This makes the sighting procedure simpler and eliminates the tendency to use the wrong pin — and the possibility of putting an arrow over the target and through the garage window.

Seek Professional Advice

Outfitting a young shooter can be confusing if you've never done it before. Often the simplest solution is to visit a local archery shop. A good shop knows their future customers will come from the younger ranks, and getting them started properly is in their best interest. These shops also stay current on the latest equipment that is available for the younger shooter and will have the arrows and accessories to build a matched outfit. Taking advantage of their expertise will take the frustration and uncertainty out of making the proper choices.

Shooting Sessions

Fun is the key word for initial shooting sessions. Remember that getting a new shooter started properly has a lot to do with how they view the sport long term. The sessions should be supervised, short and fun. For several reasons, it's best to start a new shooter up close, 10 yards or less, with a big target. First, it reduces misses, which not only makes the shooter feel good, but also eliminates a lot of time looking for arrows. Second, by shooting up close, the youngster has a better chance of hitting the target, which develops confidence. Varying the shooting by adding some breakables, such as balloons will help maintain the shooter's interest. Keep the initial sessions short or take frequent breaks. It's difficult to have good shooting form with tired muscles. Because our new shooter is just learning, it's important to avoid the development of bad habits. Tired muscles lead to bad habits. It's far better to avoid them than to try to correct them later.

Safety

While no one would consider sending a young inexperienced shooter out with a gun unsupervised, it's amazing that many people don't give the same consideration to a bow and arrow. While there are toy guns, there are no toy bows. Every bow is capable of propelling an arrow. That arrow can injure or even kill. A bow and arrow, no matter what its size, is an instrument that must be treated with respect. No one should be allowed to take a bow out of a supervised area unless that same person would be responsible to handle a firearm unsupervised. Shooting should always be done in a safe atmosphere with a proper backstop. Remember that an arrow that misses the backstop can travel quite a distance and can be a danger to anything behind the target.

Enjoy

Nothing is better proof of the fun a family can have shooting together than the Forksville Bowhunters Festival, held in Forksville each year. The shooting lines are filled with young archers who never grumble when they miss, they simply pick up their arrows and try again. The only thing bigger than their enthusiasm is the smiles on their faces.

Getting a young archer started properly brings many rewards to the teacher as well. You'll have introduced them to a sport that they can enjoy in their backyard, at the range, in competition or in the field as a bowhunter. It's an activity they can enjoy and share with others for the rest of their lives. The time, effort and cost spent in getting them started is small compared to the rewards. □

A viable option as a sighting device or just a remnant of firearm history? Here are some thoughts on . . .

The Peep Sight

ONE CHRISTMAS I could hardly wait until the noon meal was over, so I could take my new Wards Western Field .22 single-shot to a friend's house. It was the best Christmas gift I ever received, and I was smiling from ear to ear when I proudly showed it to my hunting pal.

"It looks pretty good," he said after handling it for a few seconds. "It's too bad it doesn't have a decent rear sight. You'd figure someone in your family would know that a ramp rear sight is 10 times better than a peep that sticks out like a sore thumb and can easily be damaged or knocked off."

"My brother, Dan, picked this rifle because of its peep sight, which he says is better than the V-type rear sight," I fired back.

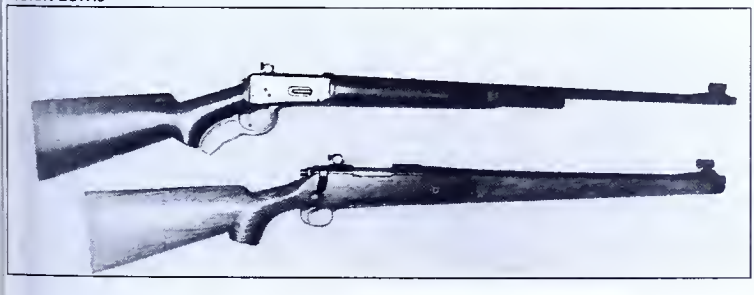
"Let me tell you something," he said with a sneaky grin. "Dan knows his stuff about guns, but he missed the boat on this one. It won't be more than a month until you've either knocked the sight off or gotten so disgusted trying to figure how to hit with it that you'll have a real rear sight installed."

Those words dug deep. I was about 16 and that was my first gun. Also, Dan had assured me that a peep sight was much better and easier to use than V-type rear sights. My friend's evaluation sure took a lot of the joy out of that Christmas.

It wasn't long, though, before I learned that Dan was right. Even my friend eventually admitted the peep was easier to use, but he still didn't like the looks of the thing. He was almost right about one thing: My uncle borrowed the rifle for butchering several hogs, and actually bent the sight when he slipped and fell while carrying the empty gun. A gunsmith patched it up, but insisted that a ramp rear sight should be installed on the barrel, because he, too, wasn't a fan of aperture sights.

Aperture sights have been offered in a variety of styles. Tang sights (a folding peep sight mounted behind the hammer) were in vogue on some of the

Helen Lewis



IT'S TRUE that the peep sight requires extra caution and care while hunting. They are stronger than they look, though, and are easier to use than open sights for many people.

older lever action rifles. When not in use, the sight could be folded down against the stock. I've hunted with rifles equipped with tang sights but, if a peep sight is easy to knock off, a tang sight in the upright position is really asking for trouble. There's no question about them being easy to damage, but many older hunters used them with good success. One drawback with the tang sights I've used was the lack of windage adjustment. The tang sight could be adjusted for elevation, but for windage, the front sight had to be moved.

Helen Lewis



SHOWN HERE is a tang peep sight. Most of these sights could be adjusted for elevation but not windage.

Does a peep sight have a real advantage over the V-type rear sight? In my book, the answer is a resounding yes. It all boils down to the factors, or sighting planes, involved. For instance, with a V-type rear sight, three planes are involved: the rear sight, front sight and target. This means the eye has three aiming points to align. The human eye, of course, is unable to focus at three different distances at the same time. To overcome this deficiency, the eye's focus must shift rapidly back and forth from one to the other. This requires extremely fast adjustment for many eye muscles. Young eyes don't have much of a problem doing this, but for weak eyes or aging eyes this is difficult. Blurring is one of the most common failures, especially for older hunters.

The aperture sight eliminates one of the three factors. The shooter simply looks through the hole in the peep sight without focusing on it. There is no need to line up the sights as is required with conventional open sights. This still leaves two focusing points. The front sight is several feet from the eye, which makes it easier to switch back and forth between the front sight and the target. There is not as much blurring with the aperture sight.

It's not an uncommon problem for hunters with iron sights to overshoot their target. When hunting in poor light conditions, it's difficult to see the front sight. Consequently, the hunter lifts his head to see better. The result is a high shot that mystifies the hunter, because his sight picture looked perfect. Another problem is that bright sunlight can cause reflections that can blur one side of the V or U notch on the iron sight. This may be an exception, but a shiny reflection does interfere with the sight picture. Neither of these problems is a factor with the peep sight. For instance, if the head is raised when using an aperture sight, the shooter won't be able to see the front sight.

I've heard shooters say that it's difficult to see quickly through a tiny hole in the aperture disc. That's no problem; simply use a larger hole. On a big game rifle, I actually screwed the disc out and used the hole in the socket, which was more than 1/4-inch in diameter. You might wonder if switching to an exceptionally large hole would still offer hunting accuracy. It did in my case.

As mentioned before, the shooter looks through the hole in the disc. Because most of the light is in the center of the hole, the

eye automatically finds the center. Within reason, it doesn't make a lot of difference (especially to a hunter) what size the hole is. Generally speaking, a hunting sight has a small disc with a large hole. Conversely, a target disc is large (nearly an inch in diameter) and has a small hole. The small hole offers a more precise aiming setup.

Another advantage of the aperture sight is that it allows the shooter to see more area around his target. Most open sight setups obscure everything below the line of sight. Rear sights, such as the buckhorn type, even cut down side vision. In other words, the "horns" of the rear sight block out much of what is on either side of the front sight. That's not the case with the peep sight. The shooter literally sees everything that is not covered by the barrel or the front sight. That's a distinct safety advantage.

It's true that rifle manufacturers today aren't putting much emphasis on iron sights. On many models, they don't install any sights. The receiver is drilled and tapped for scope mounting. This is certainly understandable, as the scope has largely replaced all types of open sights, but not every hunter or shooter is a scope fan. There are still thousands of competitive shooters and big game hunters who don't use scopes. They feel it is more of a challenge for them with iron sights, and they have every right to feel that way.

Tom Leete, my longtime hunting friend from Coudersport, is a strong advocate of open or iron sights. I actually don't know if Tom uses the aperture sight but, from many years of hunting woodchucks and squirrels with him, I know he's no slouch with the old-fashioned V or U notch rear sight. He uses a complex system for aiming his various types of sights, but when woodchucks bite the dust at distances beyond a hundred yards, it's pretty fair to assume he has a foolproof system on his old flintlock.

Many hunters have told me that using a peep sight is difficult and time consuming. To a certain extent I have to agree, because a scope, with its single aiming point (reticle that's on the same focal plane as the shooter's eye) is faster, but a dedicated aperture sight fan can put up a good argument. There's also a belief that it's impossible to be really precise with the aperture sight. That's not quite true, and I will relate an incident that happened about 20 years ago.

A hunter more than 75 years of age asked me to sight in an ex-military Springfield .30-06 that was equipped with a peep sight. I can't recall the name of the sight, but it was fully adjustable. I obliged and soon had the rifle hitting a 4-inch bullseye at 100 yards. When the elderly man asked if he could take a shot or two, I figured he would be fortunate to stay anywhere on the paper.

I watched through the spotting scope, wondering all the time how many shots it would take for him to get even close to the bullseye. My apprehension never materialized, because his first shot touched the right edge of the bullseye and his second shot was only an inch from the first. He asked if I would make a slight adjustment to move the bullet a little to the left, so he would be closer to the center. I was flabbergasted and silent. I made an adjustment and watched in admiration as the old gent fired two shots that were smack in the middle of the bullseye. "She's on now," he said with a wide grin.

Sad as it is for some shooters, the glory days of the open sight are over, although I'm sure one form or another will still be supplied on factory rifles for the foreseeable future. It's not my intent to downgrade open sights, but it's only reasonable to assume that because iron sight setups have nothing to offer in the way of target definition or for aiding certain eye problems, they will eventually disappear. Without being dramatic or profound, the famous buckhorn, V-blade and peep sight setups will eventually become just interesting pieces of firearm history. And that's too bad. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Hunters in North Dakota took 378,000 ducks in 1998 — a nine percent increase from the 347,000 taken in 1997. Mallards comprised 54 percent of the harvest.

A colony of African honey bees were found at the port of Jacksonville, Florida last spring. It's the first confirmed sighting of the "killer bees" on the U.S. mainland east of the Mississippi River. Some 26 colonies of the aggressive bee, a hybrid produced by mating European and African honey bees, escaped in Brazil in 1957. The bees have been working their way north ever since.

Hunters in New Hampshire took a record 499 bears in 1999. The state's bear population is estimated at around 4,000.

The heaviest mule deer on record weighed 410 pounds field-dressed, which equates to about 520 pounds live weight. It was taken in Colorado in 1938.

There were 3,071 turkeys taken last fall in Ohio during the 1-week season held in 25 counties. Guernsey County was tops with 257 birds taken. Juvenile hens accounted for 35 percent of the harvest; adult gobblers made up 10 percent.

Michigan hunters recorded their safest firearms deer season ever in 1999 with only 13 gun related injuries — including two fatalities — during the 16-day season. There were 21 firearm related injuries in 1998, including four fatalities.

Iowa's pheasant harvest was tops in the country for the fourth year in a row during the 1998-99 season, with 1.24 million roosters taken by 184,585 hunters. South Dakota ranked second with a harvest of 1.19 million birds.

About a third of all waterfowl on the Atlantic Flyway spends the winter in the Chesapeake Bay region.

Hunters in West Virginia took 89,900 bucks during the 2-week firearm season last fall. The harvest was nearly 19 percent higher than the 75,674 taken in 1998, and 12 percent below the record harvest of 102,484 set in 1997. Randolph County was tops with 3,394 antlered deer taken.

There were 690,104 deer hunting licenses sold in Wisconsin for the 1999 firearms season. Hunters from every state, including Alaska and Hawaii, hunted there last season, and there were 61 deer hunters from other countries. Women made up 6.8 percent of Wisconsin's deer hunters.

There were 17,850 resident Canada geese taken in South Dakota by 6,308 hunters last September.

Answers: D, O, N, O, T, T, O, U, C, H.

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STAR BARN OWLS, by Barbara Banco, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Rare birds in Pennsylvania, barn owls are found in the more open areas of the state, where they prey upon rats, mice and other small mammals.



Star Barn Owls

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

JUNE, 2000

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

Volume 71 ● No. 6

JUNE 2000

(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Matetial accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may he used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessatily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial

In Case You Missed It

IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH, Gary Alt went on a whirlwind tour of the state to muster support for our deer management program. He met with sportsmen's clubs, civic organizations and politicians, and he spoke on radio and TV, all to educate the public and decision makers on basic deer biology and management issues. "Education is the key to improving deer management," he says. "Once people understand how things work, they are supportive." Two issues of great concern, Gary stressed, are deer impacts on their environment and possible negative impacts of over-harvesting bucks.

Upon being named to head the new deer management section last fall, Alt was shocked to learn that Pennsylvania kills a higher percentage of its buck population — 75 percent statewide, 90 percent in some areas — than any other state. From a management standpoint, this suggests that there may not be enough males to breed all the does during the primary rut in November. Females that are not bred in November come into estrous in subsequent months until they are bred and then, in turn, give birth to fawns not in May or June, but in July, August, or September and so on.

Having fawns born over several months increases predation, and the later born fawns are less likely to survive bad winters or develop at a normal rate. To see if a significant number of does were bred later than normal last fall, WCOs examined roadkilled does from March through May and noted how fully developed their fetuses were.

To get a better buck:doe ratio, Alt wants to harvest more female deer before the rut. Among several advantages, this, he feels, will allow a higher percentage of the remaining does to be bred on time, and by the bigger, more mature males. This year's early flintlock season for antlerless deer is the first step in breaking away from the traditional, post-rut antlerless season.

Habitat is the crux of the deer problem, however. Across much of the state, especially the northern tier, decades of high deer populations have seriously damaged our forests. The good news is that the habitat can be fixed. Alt plans to create forest restoration areas where deer populations will be reduced and silvicultural practices employed to restore the forests. These sites will also serve as demonstration areas where people can actually see what healthy forests look like. While the relationship between deer and their environment is critical, Alt also wants to explore the human dimension side of deer management. He plans on surveying landowners, to find out how they feel about deer and hunting, and he wants to develop hunter profiles as well.

There's no question that deer management needs to be brought up to date with the demands and expectations of the 21st century. How well and how quickly we start could very well determine not just the future of deer in Pennsylvania, but the future of the Game Commission and hunting itself. Be assured, society is watching.

Alt contends that to put hunting and hunters in a positive light, we must start promoting hunting as an environmental tool and hunters as providing a free environmental service to control the deer herd and restore our forests. In this way, many lands could be opened to hunting. His biggest challenge, though, is to get Game Commission representatives, hunters, landowners, politicians and allied conservationists working together. He's off to a good start, but much needs to be done, and only with the support, cooperation and understanding of everyone involved will he succeed. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

It is not very often that an article brings tears to my eyes, but Joe Parry's "Something About a Gun" did just that. I've lived away from Pennsylvania for many years, but your magazine remains a link to the good memories I have of hunting there.

D. Shumate,
Lake Charles, LA

Editor:

Just finished "Edges of Heaven" for the second time. Guess that proves I really liked it. Maybe growing up poor, back in the Model T Ford days, affects my thinking, but congratulations to Bob Sopchick. Keep at it.

H. Hagle,
Erie

Editor:

Thank you for the fascinating story about George Miksch Sutton, in the February issue. I am the proud owner of my father's *Birds of Pennsylvania*, the book featured in the drawing accompanying the feature. My dad was an invalid during my 1930s boyhood, and he enjoyed himself by spending time by a bedroom window, using his copy of Sutton's book to identify the birds attracted to feed placed outside. Urban sprawl has since taken over the rural area where we lived, outside Pittsburgh, but this story brought back many fond memories of those days.

H. B. Birch II,
Columbia, SC

Editor:

Really enjoyed the "Behind the Badge," in the March issue. I just can't understand why people insist on driving ATVs where they don't belong or aren't allowed. They are a horrible problem here in the southwest, on game lands, state forests and — worst of all — private land.

My friends and I have had good luck obtaining permission to hunt, and I'm amazed at how over the years as properties change hands, the new landowners also allow us on their land. They all have had one resounding theme: No ATVs.

I fully support anything done to curb this problem.

B. Ruppel,
Confluence

Editor:

Anthony Marino's "Feast of the Beast," in the March issue brought back many fond memories of our Circle of Hunters, a group of family and friends that had many parties featuring wild game dinners. Although time has taken its toll on our group, the memories will always be there.

J. Melniczek,
Shillington

Editor:

For taking second place in the Jakes Division of the Greater Pittsburgh Open Turkey Calling Championship, held at the Allegheny sports show, I won the framed print of Gerald Putt's "The Resting Place" and 1998 waterfowl management duck stamp you donated as a prize. I appreciate it very much; it is a beautiful print. Thank you for helping us up and coming turkey hunters.

L. Elling,
Mahaffey

Editor:

I, too, have witnessed the woodcock "sky dance" as described by Tom Betts in the February issue, and it saddens me to think that because of habitat loss, future generations may not get to attend such wonderful performances.

D. Cameron,
Whitehouse, NJ

Editor:

Born and raised in Brooklyn, I moved to Pennsylvania in 1976 and have been deer hunting there ever since, even after moving to Florida in 1985. With good friends like Mearl, Tom and Tom, I don't care if I get a deer or not. Just being in the woods of Huntingdon County makes the trip worthwhile.

C. Gergel,
Naples, FL

Editor:

I recently started receiving *Game News*, and I enjoy it very much. I was especially taken by Bob Sopchick's "The Potato Fires."

R. Zaworski,
Baltimore, MD

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.


TOM GALLOVICH

Hog Hunting Southeast Style

By James J. Corsetti Jr.

BACK IN 1977 the main focus of my hunting in the Southeast Region started with doves in September, proceeded to squirrels in mid-October, pheasants and rabbits around Halloween, and finally buck season. Small game was plentiful then, providing a lot of recreation for a young hunter. On the other hand, turkeys were nearly unheard of and even seeing deer in the fields was unusual. Unlike others back then, I also hunted groundhogs, with a shotgun as .22 rimfires were not legalized for use in the Special Regulations Area until just a few years ago. Groundhog hunting with a shotgun was hardly a glamorous activity, but they still were something to hunt.

Today, many hunters enjoy the long range shooting opportunities woodchuck hunting offers, but here in the Southeast Special Regulations Area, groundhog hunting is done a little differently. Long range shooting is a matter of relativity, particularly depending on the sporting arm chosen. Here's how to hunt the groundhog in this region.

At present, for groundhog hunting in the Southeast, you can use a shotgun (semi-auto or manual), .22 rimfire rifles or handguns (manual actions only) and archery gear. Believe it or not, black powder firearms are not allowed for small game in Special Regulations Areas, and talking to several WCOs over the years, they believe the Commissioners just plain forgot about them for small game, groundhogs included. Someday, maybe that will be changed. In the rest of the Southeast Region, though, you can use muzzleloaders and centerfire rifles.

In many sections of the Special Regulations Area, while you're allowed to use .22s for groundhogs, it would be inadvisable and unsafe to do so. The range of a .22 is more than a mile, and most farming areas here are flat and intermixed with residential areas. Because of safety, shotguns and archery gear are better options. The only animal I have taken with a bow thus far is a groundhog. Probably the main reason is that because they are so plentiful, there is eminently more opportunity to bag them. In addition, they can be out at all times of the day, offering more chances. However, they are a much tougher target than a whitetail, and are tougher animals, too. Therefore, the only appropriate arrowhead to use is the same one used for deer, one with a cutting edge. The judo points used for squirrels are not suitable for chucks, and the target points only wound them.

To hunt them, I usually walk slowly around the edges of fields and basically sneak up on them. These same techniques can be used later, in deer season, if you don't hunt out of a treestand. Believe me, sneaking to within 20 yards of a groundhog can be difficult, and with archery gear, you should shoot only for the neck or chest. A hit anywhere else will just wound them. By using the same set up you use for deer, you're getting real

practice on a smaller target than you'll find on a 3-D course. Also, when I hunt groundhogs with a bow, I use string-tracking devices. Because it's easy to miss a chuck, you don't want to lose an arrow and have it eventually get stuck in a farmer's tractor tire or end up in a hay bale. Using a string-tracking device makes it easy to find any errant arrows.

Using a shotgun to hunt woodchucks is much the same as it is with bows. Again, chucks are tough, so you need proper shotshells. When I first started hunting groundhogs with a shotgun, I used everything from light game loads to high brass pheasant loads. Nowadays, on the rare occasion I use a shotgun, I use heavy turkey loads from size 4 to 6 lead shot. With a shotgun you can shoot groundhogs when they're running. They can move faster than they look, too, and shooting running groundhogs is good practice for rabbits and squirrels.

In many sections of the Special Regulations Area, while you're allowed to use .22s, it would be inadvisable and unsafe to do so.

Outside the Special Regulations Area, groundhog hunters have more options. There are places where hunting with a .22 rimfire is feasible, and black powder firearms and centerfire rifles are allowed. But, again, with any of these firearms you must be extremely careful where you hunt and where you shoot. I use centerfire cartridges only in areas that are hilly and have large open spaces between farms. Before asking for permission to hunt on a property, I drive around the area to learn the lay of the land. After I get permission, I look through binoculars to see where I can safely shoot.

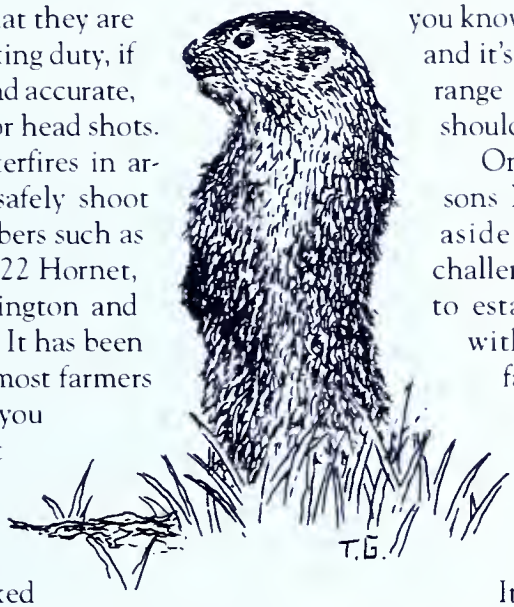
With black powder firearms, flintlock, percussion and even the new in-line designs may be used. Because I shoot Civil War guns in competitions, I use a 58-caliber musket with a conical minié ball and 50 grains of FFFg Goex powder. While that sounds like a light load, I've cleanly killed deer with it. The minié, being a heavier bullet than a round ball, distributes energy a lot more efficiently. It leaves the muzzle at only 900 feet per second, but because it's a heavy, soft lead bullet, it's extremely effective. However, you can use whatever black powder gun you wish, and just like with archery gear, if you use your pet flintlock, you'll get actual field experience that will help you in the later big game seasons. In my opinion, the responsible black powder enthusiast should shoot at ranges no more than 100 yards, if for no other reason than that is about as far as most of us can responsibly see with iron sights. You can kill at longer ranges, but your chances of hitting a small chuck beyond 100 yards are slim, unless you have a good rest and a lot of experience shooting at longer ranges.

Again, just like hunting with a shotgun, I prefer to sneak up on woodchucks along hedgerows and field edges and get within 50 yards. You can also wait them out and shoot at them when they leave their holes, which is reminiscent of the old buffalo hunters out West.

When it comes to the standard .22 rimfire, you should use only .22 Long Rifle cartridges. I havn't had much experience with the .22 Magnum, but friends of mine say it's a 150-yard gun at most. It's much more powerful than a .22 Long Rifle cartridge, but most of my friends have not been impressed with the accuracy. The .22 Long Rifle, within 75 yards, does have the

accuracy and power to kill humanely. Also, the ammo is a lot cheaper, so you can practice more with them. Remember, you must practice and sight-in with different brands of ammo to find the most accurate load for your particular gun. Once you find it, limit yourself to head shots. The fun thing about .22s is that they are light enough for stalking duty, if that is your choice, and accurate, within their range, for head shots.

Finally, with centerfires in areas where you can safely shoot them, stick with calibers such as the .17 Remington, .22 Hornet, .218 Bee, .222 Remington and the .223 Remington. It has been my experience that most farmers will ask what caliber you intend to use. Most farmers allowed me to use either my Hornet or my .222 Remington, but balked at anything bigger because of the noise.



In my experience hunting in Berks, Lancaster and Lehigh counties with centerfires, most of the shooting is done within 250 yards and more often at 150. You don't need the big boomers like the .243 Winchester and the .22-250 Remington. With any of these guns, however, knowing your backstop is an absolute must.

The standard procedure for hunting hogs with a centerfire, particularly the varmint models, is to find a nice field or series of them with nice backstops and wait for your shots. Glassing the fields for groundhogs is a nice way to spend a summer afternoon or evening. Normally, you need some sort of rest for this type of shooting. One of my friends has a portable, handmade shooting table, and it works well with sandbags and a rest. As long as you know your target's range, and it's within the effective range of your firearm, you should make regular kills.

One of the main reasons I like to hunt hogs, aside from the various challenges they present, is to establish relationships with farmers. Because farmers are usually in a constant state of war with groundhogs, most will welcome responsible chuck hunters. It's a great way to combine outdoor fun and help out a farmer who is kind enough to let you hunt on his property. At most farms I hunt, if you hunt safely, you will most likely be asked to come back, not only for groundhogs but for other game as well.

So, whether you live in the Special Regulations Area or in any other southeastern county, there are probably plenty of farmers willing to let you help with their chuck problems. It's a great way to practice for the rest of the season, and it's challenging no matter what method you use. Give hog hunting a try. □

Cover Painting by Ken Hunter

ANYONE WHO SPENDS any time at all in Penn's Woods recognizes the comical little guy depicted on this month's cover. And although at times it can be a nuisance — such as when trying to hunt squirrels — its nervous antics are entertaining to watch. The eastern chipmunk is present in every county of the Keystone State, but it varies in numbers in different places and from time to time. It prefers open woodlands with plenty of logs and stumps. Listen for their rapid chirping calls while spending time in the woods this spring.

Shotgunning Made Simple

By Jim Romanelli

IT WAS a beautiful summer day in 1964 when, at the age of 12, my shotgunning career began, and almost ended. My Uncle Joe handed me a Harrington & Richardson single-shot .410 shotgun with a full choke, threw a soda can out about 20 yards away and said, "Lets see you roll it." I loaded the shotgun, aimed and fired, and the can went end over end. And I don't mind admitting that I was pretty proud of myself. Six more shells brought six more hits, and my ego was inflating just as fast as those targets were rolling.



Jim Romanelli

UNLIKE SHOOTING a rifle, in shotgunning keeping both eyes open is necessary to determine depth perception of a moving target.

My uncle must have thought that a little humility was in store for me, though, because he said, "See if you can get this one before it hits the ground." And as he sailed the next can into the air, I quickly aimed, fired and missed.

Everyone's entitled to one miss, I thought as I got ready for the next one. Ten more tries and 10 straight misses. So much for my ego; I just couldn't understand why I was able to roll them on the ground, but they sure seemed to be pellet proof in the air.

It wasn't until several years later, by watching and listening to experienced shotgunners, that I began to realize that successful shotgunning wasn't all that difficult. With a little patience and practice of the basics, anyone can master it. Those basics aren't so much choke, gauge and shot size, although they are all part of the ingredients. The real determining factors are stance, fit, sighting, pattern and lead.

Stance

A stance should be comfortable in allowing you to swing with a moving target. Your feet should be one step apart with your left foot turned out about 45 degrees (for southpaws use the right foot), bend a little at the knees, lean forward into the shotgun and point the gun off that front foot. Then lock your upper body into this position and turn at the waist when following a target.

You'll find that whether you're in the field or on the competition line, this position is the quickest and most natural to assume. Another advantage is that you'll experience the least amount of recoil, which certainly makes shooting more enjoyable and allows for faster recovery time when going for doubles in skeet or a follow up shot on a fast breaking grouse. Of course there will be shooting situations when you can't assume the perfect position, such as when a bird flushes while you're bending under a blowdown or stepping over a log. When that happens you'll adapt the basics to work in those situations.

Fit

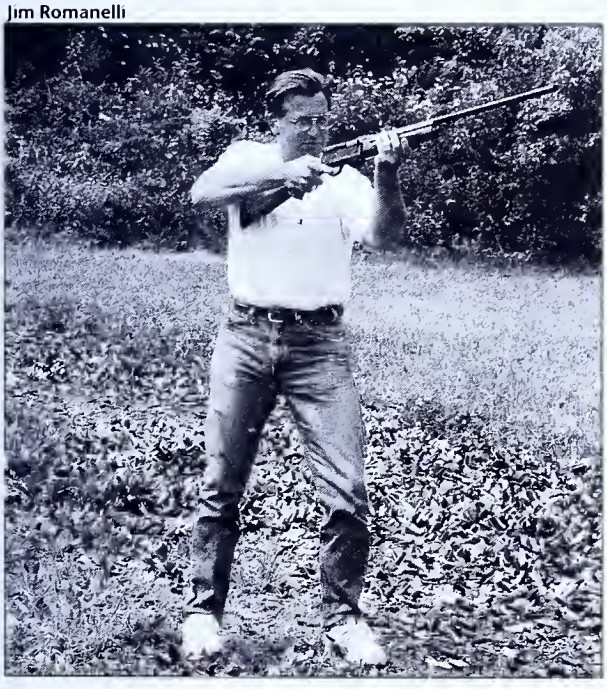
Shotgunning is a game where you "take your time fast," so you'll want to spend the least amount of time jockeying the firearm into position before the target gets out of range. This is where fit comes into play. A proper fit allows you to keep your eye on a sailing target while, in one fluid motion, the gun comes up into your shoulder, the cheek on the stock and the bead is locked just under the target, all at the same time. As you bring the shotgun to bear, if the buttstock catches you under the arm, it's too long. If you smack yourself in the nose before the stock hits your shoulder, it's too short.

To determine if the shotgun fits, hold the grip in your shooting hand, bend your arm 45 degrees, place the butt on the inside crook of your arm, pointing the muzzle straight up. The trigger should be even with the top joint of your trigger finger. This measurement is called length of pull.

Today's factory shotguns are built for the average person (about 5-9) and the length of pull is usually $14^{3}/_{4}$ inches. If you're more than 5-10, adding spacers to the butt stock is in order, and if you're below 5-7, you may need a little wood taken off the stock. A good gunsmith can determine how much.

I've heard a couple of professional shooters argue with this method because of differing chest and neck sizes in people of about the same height, but in my more than 25 years of instructing, I find this method is the best for those just starting out. They will learn to fine tune as they catch onto the game. Later on, when you get close to breaking straight rounds of skeet or trap, then you've reached the point where drop, pitch and cast measurements come into play, but unless you're into serious competition, stay with just determining the length of pull.

Jim Romanelli



Sighting

Most of us learned to shoot a

A SHOTGUNNER'S feet should be one step apart with the left foot (southpaws use the right foot) turned out about 45 degrees, bend a little at the knees, lean forward into the shotgun and point it off that front foot. Turn at the waist when following a target.

rifle before we did a shotgun, so therefore we carried over what we learned about rifle shooting into shotgunning. We learned to close one eye when sighting down those rifle sights and to put the front sight right on the target.

In shotgunning, it's a little different. Both eyes are needed to determine depth perception of a moving target. When we close one eye, we lessen the coordination of those abilities and our chances of success diminish, especially when the target goes straight across our line of sight.

With a little practice you'll find that your master eye will automatically take over, and you'll soon wonder how you ever did it with one closed. To determine your master eye extend your arms out in front of your face and overlap your hands a little, so that there is a small hole to see through. Then find an object to look at through the hole. Slowly pull your hands back towards your face while looking at the object and your hands will automatically go right to your master eye.

Also, the bead of a shotgun is used as a sighting plane, not an aiming device like a rifle sight. You should be looking at the target, and as the shotgun comes up to meet your shoulder and cheek, that bead should be locked just below the target. Because you can't focus on two objects on the same sighting plane at the same time, focus on your target and the bead should be a blur at the bottom of the target. The bead should be below so that it does not obscure the flying target. That's why shotguns are designed to shoot a half pattern high, so the target ends up in the middle of the shot pattern.

When I first got into shooting skeet, my parents always knew when a match was pending. For several evenings prior to a match, I'd practice snap pointing at the knots on the pine paneling in our den.



Jim Romanelli

TO DETERMINE if a shotgun fits, hold the grip in your shooting hand, bend your arm 45 degrees, place the butt on the inside crook of your arm, pointing the muzzle straight up. The trigger should be even with the top joint of your trigger finger.

Pattern

Pattern is where the shot column ends up in relation to where the bead is pointed. Not every shotgun throws its pattern perfectly around the target.

Ten years ago on the day before pheasant season I was in one of my favorite gun shops looking at a Remington Special Field 20-gauge with a modified choke. When I picked it up, it was quick to handle and fit like a glove. I thought I couldn't miss with the gun. I bought it right then and there with visions of pheasants roasting in the oven the following evening.

The next morning I hunted with my good friend, John, and his English setter, Darcy. On the way there I told John that my new shotgun was going to fill the larder in no time flat. Well, as it turned out, I missed five roosters.

After that morning, I patterned the gun. It turns out the shotgun was shooting a little more than a full pattern high. So all my shots went well over those pheasants.



Bob D'Angelo

IT'S ESSENTIAL to pattern a new shotgun and a variety of loads with different choke tube combinations before taking it out hunting or shooting clay birds.

The next day I took it to a gunsmith and he made a minor stock adjustment. Since then, the Special Field model has never let me down (unless it was my fault), and it has helped me bring a few skeet shooting trophies home. It taught me two valuable lessons: First, I keep my big mouth shut before I pattern a shotgun and, second, I pattern a gun before taking it out hunting.

Lead

Lead is nothing more than swinging the muzzle far enough in front of a moving target so that the flight of the target and the shot pattern meet at the same time. The easiest shot at a moving target is at one going straight away. All you need to do is to place the bead just under the target then follow its rise.

Lead comes into play when the target flies at an angle across your line of sight. For example, if a clay bird is 20 yards out going across your line of sight at 45 degrees, the proper lead is about two feet, if it flies directly across your line of sight at 90 degrees, the lead would increase to four feet.

Some shooters have trouble with a target flying directly overhead. To consistently score on an overhead shot, the target must be blotted out and the muzzle kept moving through the bird. This is exemplified at the last station in skeet with either the high or low house bird.

You will learn through experience that as the speed, distance and angle of a moving target increases, the amount of lead you take should also increase.

Epilogue

Once you understand these shooting basics, it's just a matter of practicing. Last year I cut a buttstock to fit my 10-year-old daughter's length of pull, and spent a couple of nights teaching her the basics. When I began to throw her clay birds straight away she broke 10 out of 20, using my Remington 11-48 in .410.

One of our skeet team members is a perfect example of putting together the basics. He has two guns that he uses in skeet matches, as well as in the field. One is a full choke 20-gauge Winchester Model 12 and the other a .410 Winchester Model 42, also with a full choke. As we all know, a full choke is not recommended for shooting skeet, but with either one of those shotguns he smokes clay birds shot after shot. Those guns fit him, they pattern where he sights, and he executes the proper lead, determined by a lot of shooting.

With a little observation and practice you will soon be harvesting more game and turning those clay birds into smoke. Get a friend, a box of clay birds, some shotshells and go out and have some fun. □

What's in a Name?

By Bob D'Angelo
Game News **Associate Editor**

PENNSYLVANIA is a vast area — 45,333 square miles — divided into 67 counties, each with its own characteristics, traditions, natural beauty and rich history. Did you ever wonder how our counties got their names? An ardent hunter, I've hunted in more than half our counties, and hope to hunt in most of them. And being a history buff, I've been interested in how our counties were named, and thought maybe you are, too. Here's a brief explanation of how each of our 67 counties got its name.

• **Adams** — Settled by Scotch-Irish around 1740 and separated from German-settled York County in 1800. Named after President John Adams.

• **Allegheny** — Formed in 1788 and possibly named after Allegewi Native American tribe.

• **Armstrong** — Formed in 1800 and named in honor of Colonel John Armstrong, who had a part in making the area safe from hostile Native Americans.

• **Beaver** — Erected in 1800 and named for the Beaver River, a translation of a Native American name for the stream, and noted for the prevalence of beavers on the watershed in the mid-18th century.

• **Bedford** — Named for the Duke of Bedford, and contributed much to the unique frontier history of Pennsylvania; erected in 1771.

• **Berks** — Established in 1752 and named after Berkshire, England.

• **Blair** — Named for John Blair Jr., prominent advocate of public improvements — the only county in Pennsylvania to be named for a local resident. The county was organized in 1846.

• **Bradford** — Erected in 1810 and originally called Ontario County, Bradford was named after famous statesman William Bradford.

• **Bucks** — One of three original counties, and the home of William Penn, who named the county after Buckinghamshire, England.

• **Butler** — Organized in 1800 and named for General Richard Butler, who was killed in battle with Native Americans in 1791.

• **Cambria** — Separated from Huntingdon and Somerset counties in 1804. Because many of the early settlers in this territory were Welsh, the county was named for the old poetic name for Wales.

• **Cameron** — Organized in 1860 from portions of Clinton, Elk, McKean and Potter counties, and named in honor of Simon Cameron, well known Pennsylvania statesman, member of Abraham Lincoln's cabinet and later U.S. senator.

• **Carbon** — Named for its principal product — coal — and erected out of parts of Monroe and Northampton counties in 1843.

• **Centre** — Named for its location in the center of the state and formed in 1800.

• **Chester** — One of the three original counties, it was laid out by William Penn in 1682 and was named after Cheshire, England.

• **Clarion** — Erected in 1839 from parts of Venango and Armstrong counties, it was named for the Clarion River.

• **Clearfield** — Erected in 1804, the county received its name because of its

"clear fields" where buffalo had cleared large tracts of undergrowth.

• **Clinton** — Parts of Lycoming and Centre counties were sectioned off to create the county in 1839. It was named for Governor Clinton of New York State, whose ideas on canal building were highly thought of at the time.

• **Columbia** — Organized in 1813 and was so named because of the patriotic song of Joseph Hopkinson, "Hail Columbia," which was popular during the War of 1812.

• **Crawford** — Formed in 1800 and named in honor of Colonel William Crawford, a friend of George Washington who had done much to settle Native American troubles in western Pennsylvania.

• **Cumberland** — Erected in 1750 and named after a shire in England. It was the sixth county erected in the state.

• **Dauphin** — Created in 1785 from part of Lancaster County, it was named for an heir to the French throne.

• **Delaware** — Formed in 1789 and named for the Delaware River. The county can claim the first permanent settlement in Pennsylvania by white men.

• **Elk** — Carved from McKean, Jefferson and Clearfield counties in 1843 and named for the abundance of elk in the early days.

• **Erie** — Formed in 1800 and named for Lake Erie, which in turn was named after a Native American tribe.

• **Fayette** — In 1783 it was separated from Westmoreland County, and named in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette of Revolutionary War fame.

• **Forest** — Organized in 1848 and so named because of its extensive forests.

• **Franklin** — Named in honor of Benjamin Franklin.

• **Fulton** — Organized in 1850 from a section taken from Bedford County, it is named in honor of Robert Fulton.

• **Greene** — Officially created in 1796 and named in honor of Revolutionary War General Nathaniel Greene. The region was subject to claim by Virginia, and it wasn't until after the end of the Revolutionary War that Pennsylvania's southwestern boundary was determined.

• **Huntingdon** — Named in honor of the English Countess of Huntingdon, the county was created from Bedford County in 1787.

• **Indiana** — Organized in 1803; this is one Pennsylvania County that was named after its original inhabitants — the Indians.

• **Jefferson** — Organized in 1804 and named after President Thomas Jefferson.

• **Juniata** — Named for the Juniata River and formed in 1831.

• **Lackawanna** — Named from a corruption of the Delaware Indian word, Lechau-haneek, meaning "at the forks of a stream."

Hal Korber



SEVENTEEN of our state's counties bear Native American names. Here's a no-brainer: How did Elk County receive its name?

• **Lancaster** — Named for Lancashire, England, it was the fourth county to be established in the commonwealth, and was erected from Chester County in 1729.

• **Lawrence** — Formed in 1849 and named after Captain James Lawrence of the U.S. Navy, who was killed during the War of 1812.

• **Lebanon** — In 1813 the county was separated from Lancaster and Dauphin counties, and so named for one of the townships in Lancaster County.

• **Lehigh** — Named for the Lehigh River and erected in 1812.

• **Luzerne** — Named after the French minister to America, Chevalier de la Luzerne, the county was created in 1786 and was at one time the largest county in the state.

• **Lycoming** — The largest county in the state, it is named for Lycoming Creek, which flows through its borders. It was erected in 1795.

• **McKean** — Erected in 1804 and named after Justice Thomas McKean, governor of Pennsylvania.

• **Mercer** — Formed in 1800 and named in honor of General Hugh Mercer, a Revolutionary War hero.

• **Mifflin** — Organized in 1789 and named in honor of Pennsylvania's first governor and Revolutionary War hero General Thomas Mifflin.

• **Monroe** — Organized in 1836 and named after the fifth president of the U.S.

• **Montgomery** — Formed from part of Philadelphia in 1784, it is named in honor of Revolutionary War General Richard Montgomery.

• **Montour** — Erected in 1850 and named in honor of Madame Montour, a famous Native American interpreter.

• **Northampton** — Created in 1752 and named after the Earl of Pomfret from Northamptonshire, England.

• **Northumberland** — Organized in 1772 and named after the northernmost shire in England.



Bob D'Angelo

THE AUTHOR was surprised to find this old cemetery in the middle of nowhere while hunting along Oil Creek in Venango County. One has to wonder if these former inhabitants of a long gone oil boom town realized at the time they were making history.

• **Perry** — Organized in 1820 and named in honor of Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of Lake Erie during the War of 1812.

• **Philadelphia** — The "mother of Pennsylvania," and the birthplace of the American nation was named after a Biblical city in Asia Minor.

• **Pike** — Named in honor of Colonel Zebulon Pike, a hero during the War of 1812. It was created from Wayne County in 1814.

• **Potter** — Erected in 1804 and named in honor of Revolutionary War hero General James Potter.

• **Schuylkill** — Formed in 1811 and named Schuylkill from the Dutch, meaning "hidden stream."

• **Snyder** — Formed in 1855 and named after Simon Snyder, former governor of Pennsylvania.

• **Somerset** — Organized in 1795 and taken from Bedford County; it is named after Somersetshire in England.

• **Sullivan** — Formed in 1847 and

named for the patriotic services of General John Sullivan.

• **Susquehanna** — Named for the north branch of the Susquehanna River. It was created in 1810.

• **Tioga** — Taken from Lycoming County in 1804 and named after its largest river, the Tioga.

Author used *My Pennsylvania*, published in 1946 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as a reference for this article.

• **Union** — Its name was selected when it was erected in 1813 when the federation of the states into a strong union was a new and significant experience.

• **Venango** — Formed in 1800, its name is a corruption of the Seneca Indian name of French Creek.

• **Warren** — Created in 1800, it was named in honor of General Joseph Warren of Revolutionary War Bunker Hill fame.

• **Washington** — Created in 1781 and named in honor of George Washington.

• **Wayne** — Created in 1798 and named in honor of Revolutionary War General Anthony Wayne.

• **Westmoreland** — In 1773 its territory was taken from Bedford County and named after a county of the same name in England.

• **Wyoming** — Created in 1842 and is one of 17 counties in the state bearing Native American names. It was named for the Wyoming Valley.

• **York** — Separated from Lancaster County in 1749 and named after the county of Yorkshire in England. □

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The future of hunting depends on introducing youngsters to the outdoors. If you don't get involved, who will?

Take a Kid Hunting

By Dennis Russell
Hunter-Trapper Education Instructor

OUTDOOR TV SHOWS often impress upon viewers to take a youngster hunting or fishing. The hosts are fully aware that continuing our hunting and fishing heritage depends upon getting today's youngsters involved in the outdoors.

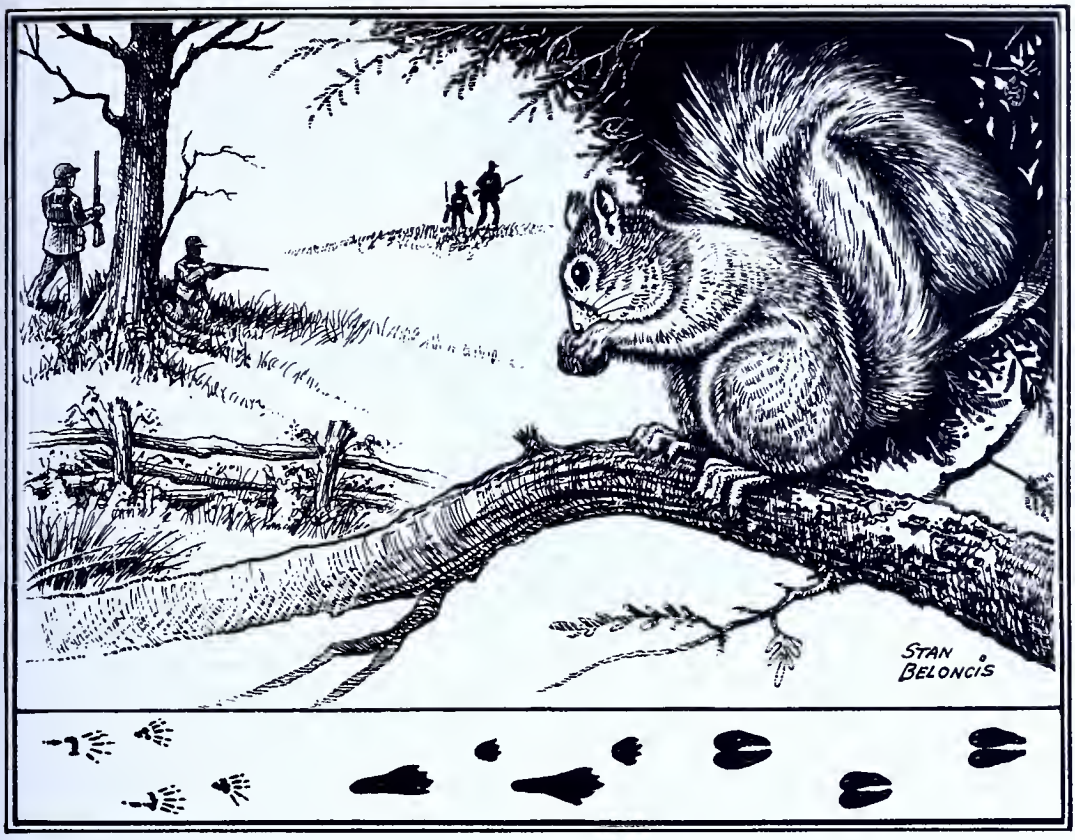
Three HTE instructors from northern Westmoreland County have put this idea into practice. Wayne Weitzel and Leo Kantorski got the idea to take some youngsters who otherwise would not have had the chance to go hunting out during the special youth squirrel hunt last season.

The instructors asked students at an HTE class to sign a form if they were interested in going on a squirrel hunt with an instructor. Ultimately selected were Jason Proctor from Irwin and Darryl Rosenbauer from New Kensington. Jason, age 13, would hunt with Wayne and carry a 20-gauge shotgun. Darryl, also 13, would use a .22/.410 combo and hunt with Leo.

As we teach in HTE classes, hunting season doesn't begin on the morning of the hunt. It starts long before, by asking landowners for permission to hunt. In this case, the landowner was happy to allow the boys to hunt on his land, and both hunters were anxious to go when the morning of the hunt arrived. In fact, Darryl told me that he hadn't slept much the night before. I explained that that was the fire that burns inside a true hunter, the desire to get into the woods and be close to nature, whether or not any game is taken.

Soon after daylight the hunters were posted at promising spots, waiting for squirrels to start moving. A short time later Jason heard a squirrel cutting acorns and soon saw his first target of the day. He waited for the right shot, made sure he had a safe background, then shot and missed. Wayne explained that missing is part of hunting. After all, they call it hunting not getting. Jason saw one other squirrel, but didn't get a shot.

Darryl didn't see any squirrels, but had a great time with Leo. He told me that it was such a great feeling to see and hear the woods come alive with sounds from songbirds to the yelping of turkeys. Darryl was full of questions and asked Leo where the topsoil and peat moss came from. Leo explained that the fallen leaves and trees decay and convert to nutrient rich soil that helps the trees grow and produce mast crops such as acorns and hickory nuts for wildlife. These are the kinds of questions young hunters need answered, so they can understand the ways of the woods.



With the action slow in the woodlot, Wayne and Leo decided to take the boys elsewhere. At the new spot they asked the landowner for permission to hunt. He was agreeable and showed them where he thought they might get some shooting. Unfortunately, the day was warm and the squirrels weren't active. Both boys had a great time, even though they didn't get any squirrels. They learned to read tracks and other sign left by a variety of game animals, and although both boys returned home tired, they were happy and anxious to go again.

A person doesn't have to wait until a youngster reaches 12 years of age to take him hunting. HTE instructor Mike Bell takes his daughter Kimberly on deer, squirrel and bird hunts, but she doesn't carry a gun. You see, Kimberly is only four years old, but she loves to be in the woods with her dad.

Well aware of passing on the tradition of hunting to our youngsters, Mike often takes Kimberly along on scouting trips. Four years old is not too young to take a youngster into the woods, and you can teach them plenty about wildlife. Already Kimberly can recognize a deer track and tell which direction it is going.

The future of hunting depends on people like these three HTE instructors. The challenge is for all hunters to take a kid hunting. Do you remember how good it felt when your dad or uncle took you hunting for the first time? Why not give that same feeling to a youngster and help pass on our hunting heritage. Don't wait for someone else to take the initiative. Do it yourself; take a kid hunting. □

When I tried to deliver the certified letter, the man demanded that I leave his property or he would shoot me. Sometimes law enforcement officers get absolutely . . .

No Respect

By William Vroman
Montgomery County WCO

MOST of the people I encounter respect game laws and understand their importance in conserving and protecting wildlife and the environment. I'm happy to add that the conservation officers responsible for upholding the game laws are also appreciated. But, as with anything else, there are some people who show little respect for wildlife, the game laws or conservation officers, and express their feelings by their actions and negative attitudes. I encountered one such person when I was just out of the training school and in my new district.

One morning I received a message from the region office to investigate a report about a man holding a fawn in a cage. I knew no one at the given address had a Deer Propagation Permit, so I went to the location to investigate. When I arrived at the home a large man greeted me. I explained why I was there and asked to see the fawn. He identified himself as Tim Dial, and he took me to an enclosed porch where the fawn was being held. Mr. Dial claimed that he was riding his horse on his property when his dogs found the fawn and attacked it. He kept saying that he saved the fawn and had been caring for it for three days. Mr. Dial's sincerity puzzled me, however, because he had been making comments to other people about eating the fawn.

During our conversation I explained to Mr. Dial why what he was doing was breaking the law, but he said that because the fawn was on his property he could do as he wished with it. He immediately became obnoxious and uncooperative. When I informed him that I was taking the fawn, he became verbally abusive. I complicated matters further by using his cage to transport the fawn because mine was too small. While I was loading the fawn, he demanded to know who had reported him. Of course I didn't reveal the informant.

Shortly after my dealings with Mr. Dial, I discovered that WCO Darin Clark had cited him prior to my arrival in northern Montgomery County. He was charged for killing a turkey on his property out of season. I also discovered that he did not pay his fine for that incident, so a warrant was issued. The matter was resolved when Darin collected the fine money from Mr. Dial.

A few days later I received a message to call Mr. Dial. I suspected that he had received his citation in the mail (I charged him with possessing a deer illegally, but I didn't charge him for his dogs chasing the fawn). When I returned his call Mr. Dial said that he was displeased with the cita-

tion, and that he would ask for a hearing. He then said, "I'm going to sue you when the court hearing is over." Mr. Dial was under the false impression that he could do whatever he wanted on his property.

On the court date, despite the informant not testifying, there was enough evidence for the district justice to find Mr. Dial guilty. The judge told Mr. Dial that he should have contacted the Game Commission immediately after finding the fawn, so there was no excuse for keeping it.



Hal Korber

IT'S ILLEGAL to take a fawn from the wild. Chances are this little guy's mother is somewhere nearby and will return at feeding time.

Several months later I received notification from the region office that because of the fawn possession case, Mr. Dial's privilege to hunt and trap in Pennsylvania had been revoked for a time and a certified letter had been mailed to him informing him of the action. Mr. Dial would not accept the letter, however, so it was my responsibility to serve the notification.

Deputy Mark Butkowski and I pulled into Dial's driveway, and he happened to have just pulled in ahead of us and got out of the car carrying a jug of wine. I explained the contents of the letter and asked him to sign it but he refused. He then became very belligerent and demanded I leave his property or he would shoot me. When I asked him if he was threatening me he said that he wasn't because I had a gun and he only had a wine bottle. It was obvious that he was intoxicated, so we left the premises.

A few days later I received a message from Mr. Dial informing me that he was going to sue me for trespassing on his property. I guess he didn't remember about threatening to shoot me. I explained to him that under the Game and Wildlife Code, I could enter his property in the performance of my duty. Mr. Dial wasn't interested in this fact, though, and he again threatened me with bodily harm if I returned.

Considering Mr. Dial's extreme dislike for me, I thought he would pay his fine so he wouldn't have to deal with me again, but he didn't. I received a warrant for his arrest, and because of the threats, I had state police accompany Deputy Butkowski and me. Things were different this time, however, as Dial was cooperative and paid the fine, despite claiming he had already done so.

While leaving I thought for an instant that Mr. Dial had truly been sorry for his actions, but then I noticed several spent shotshells in the grass near his front porch. I suspect he had been shooting at songbirds from the porch. Unfortunately, some people don't have any respect for the law. ☐

Penn's Woods Sketchbook



Keepers of Time

Bob Sopchick

I HAVE an old wooden cigar box full of odds and ends, trinkets that fell from use and novelties that ended up here instead of getting tossed. It's mostly packrat stuff: old DU pins, outdated stamps, a scratched magnifying glass, spent rifle brass. Included in this debris is a tangle of tarnished and broken wristwatches that have marked the minutes of my life. They lay here silently now, hands frozen, obscure dates stalled in tiny windows. No Rolexes here, as I'm really rough on watches. These have broken bands, loose stems, glass scratched by boulders or flecked with paint. My wife even bought me a sturdy looking military watch that I somehow managed to destroy. Watches with leather or canvas bands stain the paper I draw on, and expandable wristbands always break or are too shiny for the field. I finally resigned myself to not carrying a watch at all, until my good friend, Chuck, fixed me up with a fine antique gold pocket watch from his jewelry store.



This small watch was made in 1912 by the Illinois Watch Company and has handsome decorative numerals. It's protected by a hunter's case that is engraved with a gothic "R," the initial of the former owner, which is the same as my own first name. Close enough. When the back is opened it has a beautiful works with 11 jewels. I like having it in my pocket and pulling it out by the chain only when I must know the exact time, as opposed to a digital face on my wrist, blinking at me, reminding me that a deadline looms, that the Fed-Ex truck is coming for pickup, or that I've only a few more minutes to talk when giving a lecture. With the watch in my pocket I feel as if I have time harnessed, controlled by me, rather than the other way around.

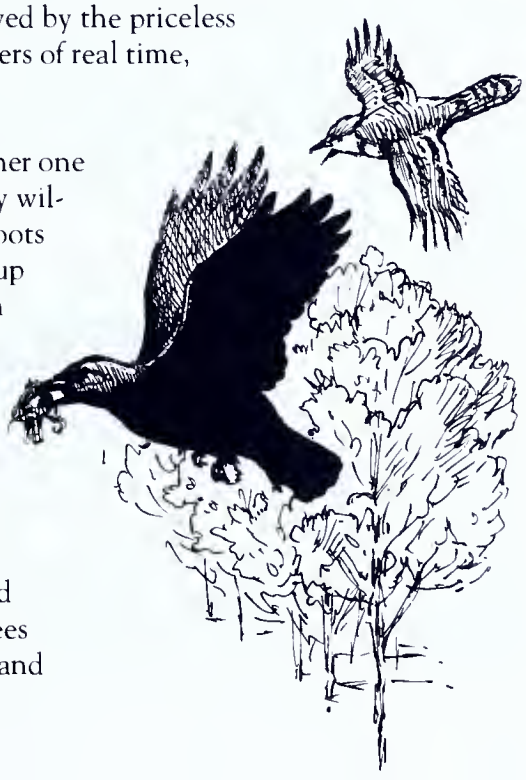
For most people time is an abstract thing, but it's no secret that the outdoorsman understands it better than anyone. If he desires to travel back to prehistoric times he need only examine the relief of an ancient fern on a piece of shale. He may sense the primeval drama of centuries past by standing before a majestic pine at Hearts Content, won-

dering about the myriad forms of life that have passed near its great trunk. At streamside he can see time move, witness the seconds flee by watching the translucent ephemera of mayflies that live and die almost within the same instant. Within a clutch of bird eggs he sees the future.

When a hunter aligns his sights on a deer, time stands still; he knows that in the next instant, when the trigger is pulled or arrow released, time will start again, and in that moment he'll sense his own mortality, realize his own place in time.



On my way home from a bird watching jaunt I stop at the National Watch and Clock Museum in Columbia, Lancaster County. This intriguing and beautiful museum is dedicated to horology, the science of measuring time by mechanical devices. The museum chronologically displays the entire history of timekeeping technology with a collection of more than 12,000 items, including many ingenious and beautiful timepieces from around the world. Today, I've studied some of the most wondrous timepieces fashioned by the hand of man, and earlier, the movement of migrating warblers and other spring birds drifting through the emerald canopy. I thought of how time is different for each of us, defined by where we are and what we are doing. In the clockwork of my pocketwatch the jewels are positioned among the spinning and whirling wheels and gears, just like the birds in a marsh or woodland are positioned among the swaying and arcing cattails and boughs, helping to mark the seconds and minutes and days and seasons — beautifully, steadfastly, perpetually. No wondrous timepiece I studied today at the museum can measure time as it is marked and displayed by the priceless jewels of nature's grand clockwork, the keepers of real time, the birds.



I recall as a boy being sent out by my mother one blustery March day to cut an armful of pussy willows for her big table vase. I pulled on my boots and slogged past the mule barn and mines, up past the dynamite shanties to a row of catkin shrubs on the slope above the big domed kilns of the brick refractory. I sat upon a sandstone slide and looked out over the valley. Steely clouds gave way to a great stretch of cobalt sky as the winds subsided and the toiling sun warmed the earth. I listened to birds singing near a spring, and watched them flit and scratch in the undergrowth. I marveled at a brilliant cardinal and a skein of chickadees when a small brownish bird with a dark spot and



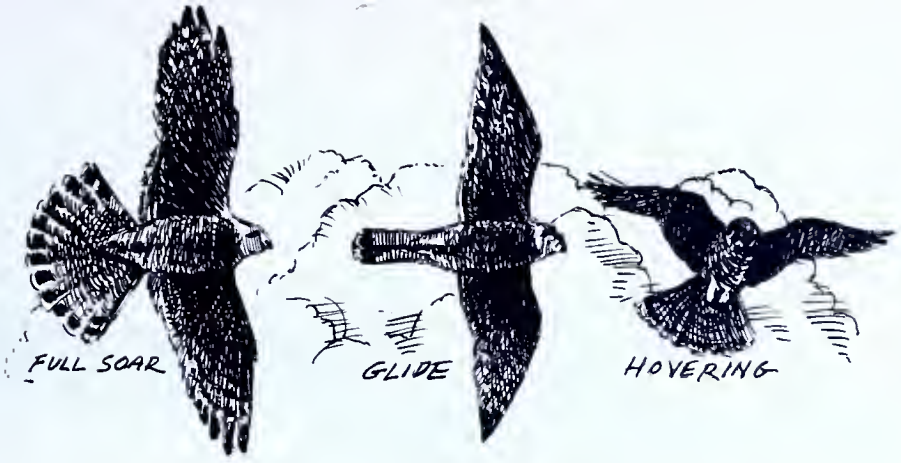
streaks on its chest perched on a catkin branch right in front of me and sang a hearty, cheerful song. I recognized the tune as one that had once beckoned to me from outside our classroom, and I was delighted to finally see its maker and learn that it was a song sparrow. To this day I always pause in my tasks when the song sparrow sings. It's a moment well spent.

Migrating flocks of robins have invaded every holly tree around, gorging themselves for days on end with the red berries, loafing here from early February into March. They fly in and out of the dense foliage, gobbling up berries then back to nearby trees to rest, digest and preen. A few prefer to sun themselves on the exposed lawn near the fence where the snow has ebbed. The robins are really noisy, and when a sharp-shinned hawk flashes past, the flock immediately clams up and freezes for a few minutes. The flock leaves during the second week of March, and resident birds have moved back (or stayed on?). With two inches of snow in early April, the robins stand on the streets and sidewalks, puffed up against the cold, seemingly perturbed by nature's clock, which seems a bit off.

Five blue jays scream bloody murder from a hemlock, and I inch closer to see that the focus of their ire is a Cooper's hawk on the ground mantling a cowbird. The Coop tolerates my presence for a few minutes, then flies away with its catch and lands in an oak to finish its feast, giving me an even better view. The hawk is an immature female with a yellow-orange eye that will turn blood red when she matures. It's theorized that the eyes of the Coop gradually turn red after several seasons, when the hawks have become veterans at feeding their young, which often mistake the red eye of an adult as a piece of red meat and peck at it.

White-throated sparrow males readily return their whistled song, *my sweet Canada, Canada, Canada*, but I can never cut in on a mockingbird when it pauses between imitations, nor have I ever had one match or repeat a contrived whistle. They just continue on with their string of tunes, ignoring me. The mocker may be an accomplished and entertaining songster with hundreds of songs, but it pales in comparison with the brown thrasher, which may have more than 2,000 sound bytes in its repertoire.





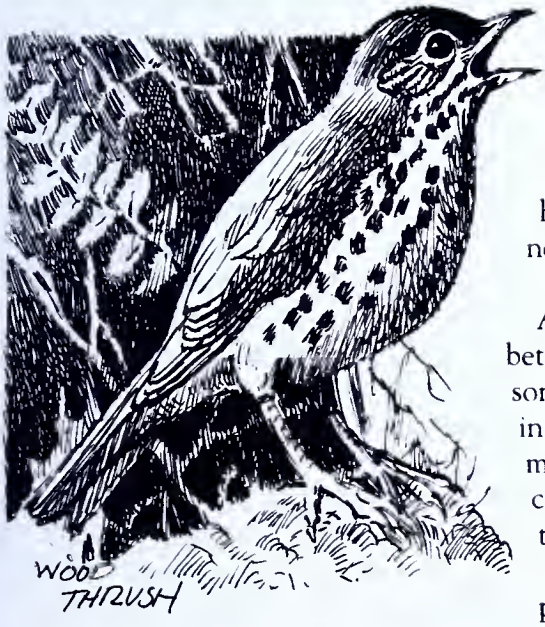
All winter I watch crows as they eke out a living from the bleak landscape, always ready and willing to harass and drive off every hawk that I want to watch. I listen to them in the early mornings when they gather in the locust trees, muttering or speaking in their piping notes. I watch them walk three abreast through grass fields, like hunters trying to kick out small game. In spring, though, crows aren't tolerated by nesting birds, which sometimes fly to great heights to drive them from their territories. Every spring I see these clever opportunists carry off nestlings, most recently, the offspring of their close cousin, a blue jay.



Dark-eyed juncos are handsome birds, formally attired in gray flannel and white. Whenever they fly into heavy cover they always hook in, flaring their tails, flashing the outer white tail feathers, reminding me of a baseball player hook sliding into second base.

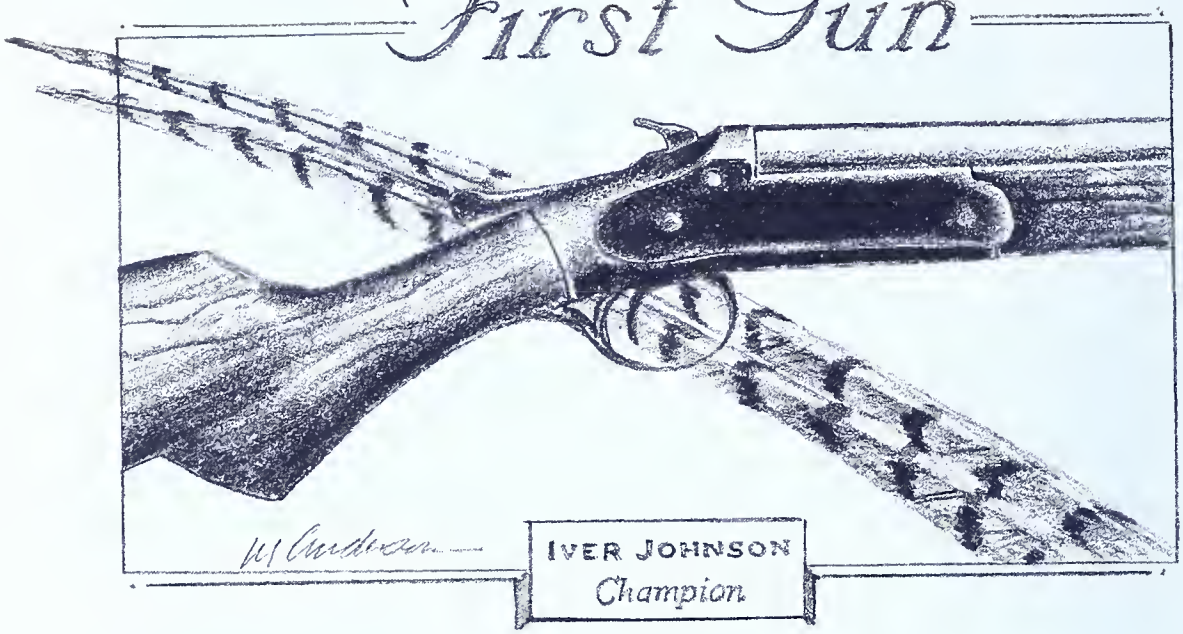
I enjoy the various silhouette shapes of our smallest falcon, the American kestrel. In full soar its wings are fully outstretched and the tail is fanned. When gliding, the tail is folded and its long primaries are pulled back a bit, giving it the exact shape of a compound bow.

Sometimes in a moderate wind kestrels hover-hunt, flapping their wings with tail spread, looking for prey. Kestrels would much rather hunt from a perch, though, and hover-hunt only when suitable perches are not available.



A hike through the summer woods is always better when the countersinging and mismatched songs of several wood thrushes is heard. Males in adjacent territories exchange songs without matching that of their neighbor, creating a continual liquid melody of amazing diversity that trickles through the dark woods — lovely, ethereal background music for the perpetual tick, tock, tick of life.

First Gun



By Tom Mitchell

WHEN LEARNING to shoot, most kids start with a BB gun or a .22 rimfire then graduate to a small bore shotgun. I was an exception, though. My first gun was an old Iver Johnson Champion 16-gauge single-shot. Oh, I had borrowed a single-shot .22, and had fired a friend's BB gun hundreds of times, so for a young man I felt that I was adequately acquainted with firearms to make my first gun "a man's gun."

Part-time jobs in those days paid rather well, and I managed to earn as much as 50 cents an hour. After a summer of bailing hay and cutting a neighbor's lawn, I had managed to put aside the staggering sum of $12. With this small but hard-earned fortune, I was able to purchase my shotgun. Actually, a 16-gauge would not have been my first choice; a 12-gauge would have been more to my liking. But at the pawnshop where Grandpa and I made my purchase, only two shotguns were in my price range, a 20-gauge and a 16-gauge single-shot. Naturally, I opted for the larger "more powerful" gauge.

Upon learning of my new acquisition, a relative donated a box of shells. I can still remember the brand, Remington-Peters, "high brass" in number 7½ shot. Of course, I was now not only the proud owner of a "big bore" shotgun, I also considered myself somewhat of an expert on guns. After all, I had been reading about them for nearly three years before I owned my own. I knew that the first thing to do with my new shotgun was to pattern it, so I tacked up a few sheets of newspaper on an old fence. I learned a lot from that first shooting session, mainly that my new gun kicked like the proverbial mule. After the first two or three shots my shoulder was bruised and battered, but I would never admit it to anyone, not even to myself. Forcing a grin and holding back a grimace, I turned to my grandfather who

was overseeing the operation. "That wasn't too bad," I said, "but I'd better not shoot too many shells, gotta save some for hunting, you know."

"Yeah, right," and a wry smile was his only reply.

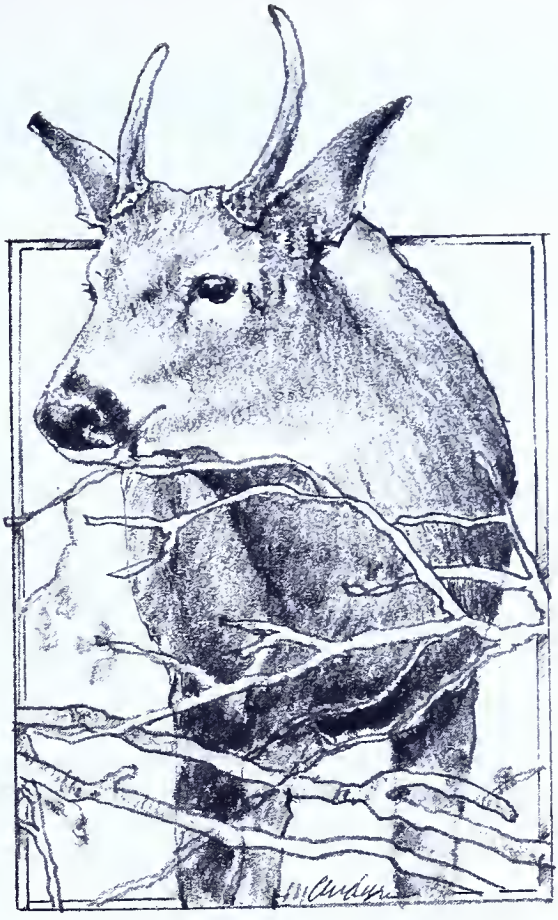
Hunting season was two months off — a virtual eternity — but at last, opening day arrived. Our party of three flushed four or five pheasants, and I got shooting at two, missing both. I blamed it on the small shot size. "Should have had 6s," I said. Several weeks and about 20 or so shells later, I connected on not one, but two birds in the same day. Now I was an expert.

November was progressing rapidly and the opening day of deer season was quickly approaching. I couldn't afford to buy a deer rifle, and I tried, in vain, to borrow one. "Use your old shotgun and 'punkin' balls'" a relative suggested. So, with the last of my savings I bought a box of slugs. Drawing on my deep expertise and vast experience, I knew that a shotgun shooting slugs could be an effective, although a short range firearm. I also reasoned that the lack of a rear sight would make aiming difficult, but I was determined to get a deer with my all-around, "game-getter" shotgun.

After punishing my shoulder by firing 10 or so slugs at a makeshift target, I managed to get a few of the slugs to actually print on the cardboard; two were even close to the bullseye. A few more "make sure" shots left me with five shells, more than enough to bag one deer I reasoned. I was ready.

When a few school chums and a relative or two heard that I would be hunting with a full choke, single-shot 16-gauge shotgun — one without a rear sight, no less, I received plenty of guffaws and outright laughter. Perhaps that was good, because the ridicule made me more determined than ever to bag my first deer.

My plan was simple. I would hunt in



an old swamp near my grandparents' farm. I had trapped the swamp for the past two seasons and knew that the nearly impenetrable 4-acre tract was loaded with deer. An older relative assured me that deer don't live in such places, but if I wanted to waste my time by going there, I was welcome to do so. He added insult to injury by suggesting that if I had a "regular" deer rifle, he might consider letting me accompany him on his annual deer hunting pilgrimage to Potter County. I mumbled an insincere "thank you," and excused myself.

At 5 a.m. the old alarm clock jangled for no more than a second, and I rocketed from my warm bed, pulling on my socks and jeans, oblivious to the room's chill. After wolfing down a quick breakfast, I headed out over frosty, snow covered fields to my deer laden swamp.

First light. I shrugged and shivered inside my canvas hunting coat, a treasured hand-me-down that only a true "deer hunting expert" would wear, and tried to ward off the bone-chilling cold.

It was well past daybreak, but no sun appeared in the overcast sky to warm my shivering body. Then I heard it. The soft crunching of what had to be deer hooves. Suddenly, out of a stand of thick brush, three, perhaps four doe moved ghost-like over patches of snow covered land and delicately clicked-clacked their way across a narrow channel covered with ice.

At the click of the hammer, the buck stopped and cast a suspicious look that bore a hole right through me. He was a scant 20 feet away.

I held my breath for fear they would see my frosty exhaling, then they disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. Was this an apparition? A dream? Then I heard more crunching coming my way, but from only one deer. A buck? Yes, there he was in all his glory, sporting a magnificent set of spikes.

Despite shaking so bad that I nearly dropped my gun, I eased it up to my shoulder and cocked the hammer. At the click, the buck stopped and cast a suspicious look that bore a hole right through me. He was a scant 20 feet away. I think I fired. At least I remember a dull roar and being momentarily blinded by an orange flame that blazed out of the muzzle. When I recovered from unfelt recoil, the buck was nowhere to be seen. How could he vanish so quickly? Then I saw a faint movement in the spot where he had stood. A leg flailed in the air, then another.

Reload! I thought. Shoot him again! But there was no need. My prize lay still on a sheet of ice. The "expert" hunter had connected with his first buck.

In the days that followed, I delighted in recounting my adventure — and in giving my best deer hunting advice to my older but "deerless" relative who had gone north. For some reason he never invited me on a Potter County deer hunt, even when I did have my first "regular" deer rifle. And with all the hindsight of a young man, I reasoned that this deer hunting was easy — but only if you're an expert.

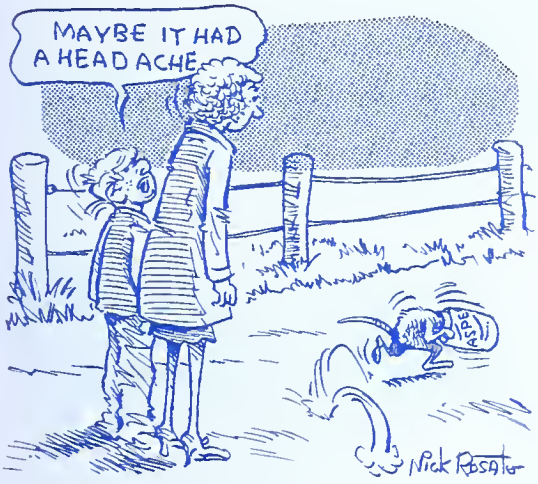
Now that I'm a wee bit older (wiser, too), I no longer consider deer hunting to be easy. And with each passing season I come to the realization that perhaps I'm somewhat less of an expert than I was back then. However, each hunt, successful or not, is just as exciting and memorable as that first hunt in 1956 — well, almost. □

FIELD NOTES

Outfoxed

MONTGOMERY — Frank Helstrom was using a rabbit decoy attached to a line on his fishing rod while calling in foxes when he noticed a fox coming into his calls from some distance away. He had his eyes glued to the approaching fox when he got a terrific "bite" on his line. It seems a different fox had grabbed the bait and ran off with it.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



Big Headache

BUTLER — My mother picked up my son from school, and as they were driving home they noticed a small animal hopping across the road. My son said, "Look, it's a kangaroo rat." As they got closer, they saw that it was a Norway rat that had its head stuck inside an aspirin bottle.

— WCO KEVIN W. THOMPSON, SAXONBURG

Some Similarities

UNION — I asked a 6-year-old boy who stopped by our exhibit at a show if he wanted to be a game warden when he grew up. "Naw," he said, "I want to be a 'monster truck' driver."

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Good Job

SOMERSET — Frank Meyers of Windber caught a fisher in one of his coyote traps, so neighboring WCO Tom Fazi and, then trainee, Denise Mitcheltree, met me and we followed Frank to the fisher. After covering it with a blanket, we released the trap, which held the fisher between the toes and pad of its foot. Examining the foot and leg, we found not the slightest damage. District 5 Trapper's Association holds a 4-day class at Camp Harmony every year, and the instructors emphasize proper sets and adjustment of traps. Frank's catch and release of the fisher would have received an "A" from class instructors. His trap was swiveled and the jaws were offset, allowing the animal to be released unharmed.

— WCO SCOTT W. TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN

Superman?

SUSQUEHANNA — What do you call a man who runs with track star speed alongside a moving vehicle, moves with cat-like reactions to the feints of a bear with cubs, crawls into a bear's den with the enjoyment of a child playing in mud, and eats a Big Mac with the gusto of a teenager? You call him Bill Bower, senior WCO in the Northeast Region. This man sets a fine example for younger officers.

— WCO CHARLES J. ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Nature's Way

FULTON — Waterfall resident Joanne Gilbert called about a swan with a broken wing swimming in a stream behind her house, but by the time I arrived two mink had killed the bird and were making a meal out of it. As I explained to Mrs. Gilbert, as is often the case, injured wild animals provide a meal for other animals.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE



"X-Files"

CAMERON — I've seen a variety of wildlife here in my new district, from elk and porcupines to bobcats and eagles, but I look forward to meeting the men from Mars. DCNR forest ranger Jim Degler told me that a group from Mars in Butler County owns a cabin in my district and are up during the hunting seasons.

— WCO WES STAUFFER, EMPORIUM

It's the Key

I got to see firsthand how quickly deer respond to habitat management. One day last winter, just before noon, I did a small border cut on the edge of the woods and by early afternoon there were two deer browsing on the fresh tops.

— LMO DAVID MITCHELL, FOGELSVILLE

Commitment

JEFFERSON — Thanks goes out to the Jefferson County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and the Sigel Sportsmen's Club for hosting Dr. Gary Alt at the Brookville High School in March. Because of these two groups, more than 200 people were treated to an informative program on deer and deer management. Organized sportsmen groups have a long history of doing whatever they could to help wildlife. It's nice to see that same level of cooperation is still alive today.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Fair Game

CLARION — As a WCO, I must be extremely careful each and every day about what I say or do. Not only because an officer must be aware of his public image, but I have this nagging sensation that my new neighboring officer is watching me closely to gather material for Field Notes.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Realistic Presentation

WESTMORELAND — Instructor J. B. Baustert was set up as a turkey hunter at a HTE class during a walk-through portion of the course. As instructor Wayne Weitzel approached his location with a group of students, J. B. started calling. A flock of turkeys on the ridge just above the group immediately answered the call, and then the entire flock sailed over the class, heading directly for J. B.

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK



Overlooked Treasures

Whenever possible, hemlocks and other conifers that provide winter cover are excluded from game land timber sales. While recently inspecting a planned sale, I marveled at the size of some of the slow growing giants. How many years must have passed for them to get this big? Some may even have felt the weight of Native American moccasins over their roots.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Lifesaver

McKEAN — I've just completed a year of covering two districts, and without the dedicated service of my deputies, particularly Pat Vinca, Howard Kane and Gary Howes, I couldn't have done it. Our deputies are unsung heroes and too often taken for granted.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT

Can't Beat the Source

ELK — A man asked me if I had heard about the man in Colorado who had been fined $50,000 and sentenced to a year in jail for the illegal possession of five bighorn sheep. I said no, then he asked if I heard about the guy in Michigan who had been fined $2,500 and banned from hunting in the state for life for shooting a wolf. Thinking there was some new Web site I should know about, I asked where he was getting all the interesting information. "*Game News*," he said. To our *Game News* staff: Keep up the good work.

— WCO DOTY MCDOWELL, SAINT MARYS

You Never Know

HUNTINGDON — WCOs Phil Lukish, John Roller and I had just pulled into a remote area to capture some nuisance beavers when I looked down and noticed a $20 bill. I asked if either of them had dropped any money, and both said no, but that in more than 20 years on the job, neither had never found any money. Maybe it's my younger eyes, or maybe money really does grow on trees.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Many Thanks

ERIE — WCOs often hear the statement, "I don't want to get involved" from individuals who have witnessed a Game Law violation. This past year I've had several cases that without a witness getting involved, the violators would not have been prosecuted.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN



Cross Country

ADAMS — Biologist Mike Neibauer, student Mark Asper and I fitted a turkey with a radio transmitter on March 6 near Kings Gap in Turkey Management Area 7-B. On March 30 we located the bird seven miles from the trap site; it had crossed two mountains, a valley and a county border.

— WCO RICHARD KARPER, YORK SPRINGS

Better than a Dog

Assigned to the Northwest Region Office, one of my first duties was to assist WCO Chip Brunst trap and relocate nuisance beavers. We caught three and were transporting them to another location when we stopped to render medical assistance at the scene of an automobile accident in West Sunbury. We had two beavers in the back of the truck and one in a cage sitting on our deer rack when I noticed an elderly lady staring at the beaver in the cage. She turned with a questioning look, so I said, "He's guarding our truck."

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, FRANKLIN

Referee

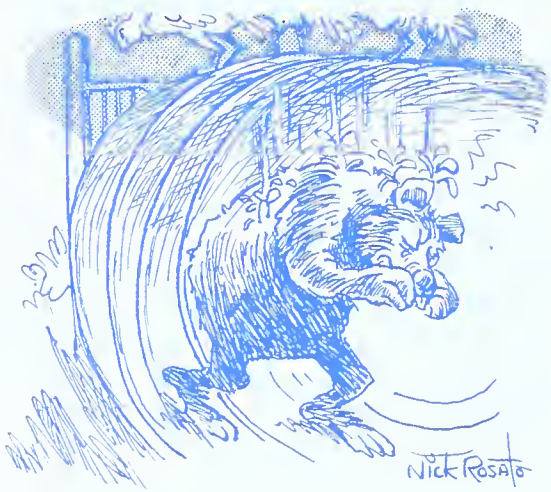
TIOGA — Some Army Corps of Engineers employees told me they broke up two serious fights on their property. The first involved a scuffle between two immature bald eagles in a tree, then two turkey gobblers battled it out under the same tree.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Shameful

Fifteen members of the Pennsylvania Equine Council recently gathered up 1,200 pounds of garbage and 12 tires from SGL 232. Pretty remarkable, considering the same group cleaned up 1,200 pounds of litter from the same roadsides and parking areas last year.

— LMO George J. Miller, Pittsburgh



Payback

I caught a bear in a culvert trap that had been taking several chickens, and I think the chickens were trying to get even, because when I arrived at the farm to pick up the bear, several surviving chickens were perched on top of the trap.

— WCO Victor E. Rosa, NE Region Office, Dallas

High Wire Act

Have you ever seen a squirrel walking on an overhead electric line and wondered what would happen if it met another one coming from the opposite direction? Paul Yankovich of Benton saw just such a scenerio. The two squirrels ran directly towards one another, and about the time they would have bumped noses, one rolled upside down and continued its journey along the underside of the wire. When the two animals had passed each other, the squirrel running along the underside of the wire righted itself and continued on.

— LMO Keith P. Sanford, Mifflinville

Different Paths

Bradford — I was presenting an award to Annette Ward for the excellent job she does of teaching her second grade students at Springfield School about wildlife and conservation when she mentioned that she enjoys raccoon hunting, and as a side benefit, had lost some weight while doing it. I told her that the one and only time I went raccoon hunting, the only thing I lost was my way.

— WCO William A. Bower, Troy

Smart Deer

Schuylkill — While my daughter, Elizabeth, was driving her friends and me to a ballgame one afternoon, we saw a deer running at full speed along the top of a hill, heading for the road in front of us. Elizabeth pulled over as we watched the deer come to a screeching halt at the edge of the road. After looking both ways the deer sprinted across the road and continued on its run.

— WCO Steve Hower, Pine Grove

Freak Accident

Wyoming — I responded to a call about a muskrat stuck in a chain-link fence and discovered that the furbearer had crawled through one of the small openings and suffocated while trying to back out. A bizarre and ironic death considering that the muskrat had survived a recent trapping season and avoided a whole host of predators.

— WCO William Wasserman, Tunkhannock

Down the Line

Greene — Being assigned to eastern Greene out of the training school, neighboring officer Rod Burns from western Greene was assigned as my "big daddy" to give me guidance. His big daddy was WCO Stan Norris, who is my neighboring officer in Fayette County. The way I figure it, I'm the first WCO to have a big daddy and a "big grandfather."

— WCO Brian E. Witherite, Waynesburg

Partly Right

ELK — I was showing a Cub Scout group wildlife slides when one young fellow yelled out Tazmanian devil when he saw a slide of a bear in a culvert trap. I'd say the youngster has been watching too many cartoons or has been getting too close to my bear traps. There have been some bears in my traps that reminded me of a Tasmanian devil.

— WCO DICK BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

New Generation

MCKEAN — While visiting Farm-Game cooperators, nearly all have told me that hunters failing to ask permission is not the problem that it once was, but that hunters using ATVs without permission and littering have become major concerns.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Surprise

CENTRE — After 40 weeks of intensive training, I thought school was over. After just three weeks in my new district, however, I realize that school has just begun.

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, KARTHAUS

Common to the Region

WARREN — As a newcomer to the Northwest Region, I thought it was a big deal when I saw my first black squirrel. Now, I see them quite often here.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

That'll Teach Ya

Due to the unseasonably warm weather late last winter I noticed a turkey vulture on February 26 and a woodcock performing its spring courtship ritual on February 28. When I mentioned seeing the woodcock to my wife, she said she hoped the male woodcock didn't think any females would be dumb enough to come north that early.

— WES RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Popular

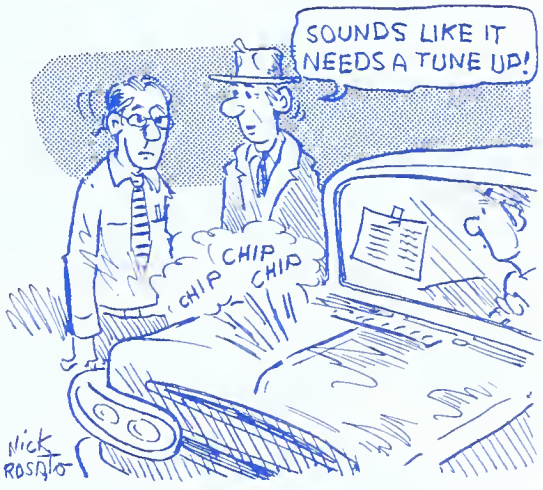
BERKS — A sure sign that a WCO has become an established member of the community is when the town residents stop by to inform him of where the roadkilled deer are located.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Drawin' a Crowd

WCO Steve Hower brought a banty rooster by to show me, but my own rooster didn't appreciate a new arrival to his territory. There was a lot of crowing and sparring going on, and after a while I looked out the window and was surprised to see that the ruckus had attracted a jake turkey and a ringneck pheasant.

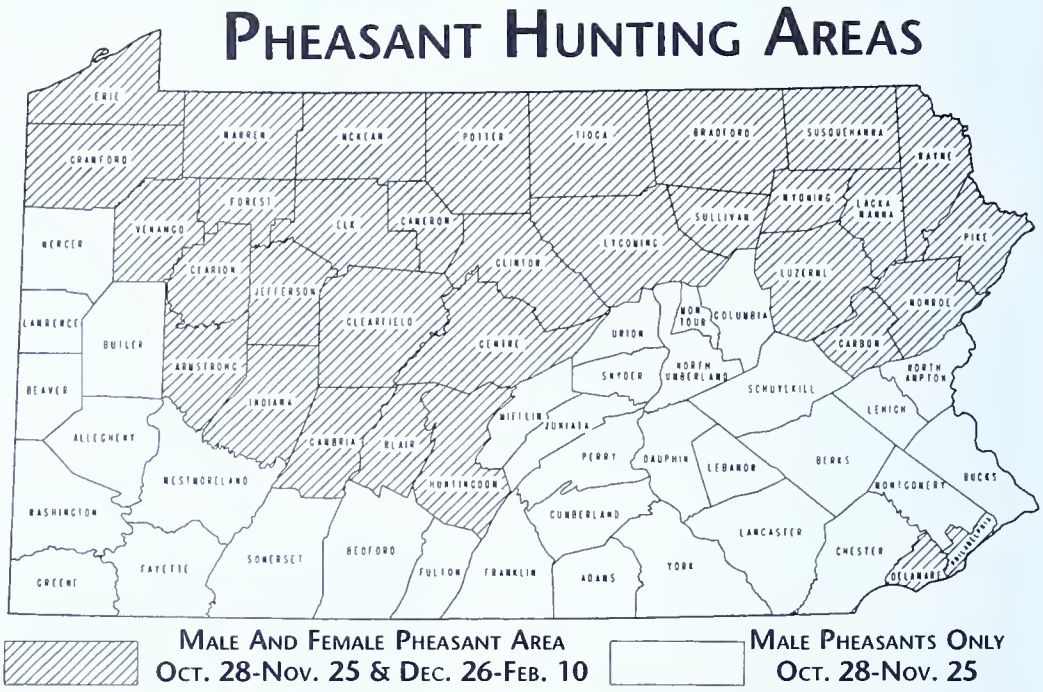
— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN



Paid Peanuts

LYCOMING — I got a call from the manager of Blaise Alexander Chevrolet car dealership in Montoursville about a family of squirrels in the engine compartment of a car that had been sold. The young squirrels were chattering away as I crated them up to be taken to a rehabilitator, and one of the salesmen said they liked the car so much they didn't want to leave. The squirrels will be cared for until they can be released into the wild.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTOURSVILLE



New pheasant zones, extensions for TMA 9B, mink and muskrat trapping extended . . .

2000-2001 Seasons & bag limits

HIGHLIGHTS of the 2000-2001 hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits approved by the Game Commission in April were published in last month's issue. Following are additional news items, plus the complete seasons and bag limits. The antlerless deer license allocation will be published next month.

In cooperation with Pheasants Forever and in hopes of reestablishing pheasant populations, the Game Commission approved the retention of male-only pheasant hunting areas in most of the southern portion of the state.

"Working with the Game Commission's Bureau of Land Management, Pheasants Forever has invested considerable time, money and effort in habitat improvement to aid in the reestablishment of permanent pheasant populations in many southern counties," said Commissioner Samuel Dunkle. "For that reason, I believe we should support their independent efforts by returning [from what had been proposed] much of the southern portion of the state to a male-only pheasant hunting area."

By limiting hunting to males only, female pheasants will have a chance to survive and breed.

The Game Commission approved

the proposed turkey hunting seasons, with one change. Commissioners extended the proposed fall turkey hunting season in Turkey Management Area 9B by moving the starting date to Oct. 28, the first Saturday opener for this area. The season still will run until Nov. 4.

All other fall turkey hunting seasons, as well as the spring gobbler season, were adopted as proposed at the January meeting.

In addition, Commissioners approved an extension of the statewide mink and muskrat trapping season. Under the adopted trapping seasons, minks and muskrats may be trapped from Nov. 18 until Jan. 14.

Following are the 2000-2001 seasons and bag limits.

2000-2001 Hunting Seasons and bag limits

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined):

Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license — Oct. 7–9;
Fall Season — Oct. 14–Nov. 25;
Late Season — Dec. 26–Feb. 10, 2001
(6 daily, 12 in possession after first day)

Ruffed Grouse:

Oct. 14–Nov. 25 and Dec. 26–Jan. 27, 2001
There is no open season for ruffed grouse in that portion of SGL 176 in Centre County that is posted "RESEARCH AREA – NO GROUSE HUNTING."
(2 daily, 4 possession)

Rabbit (Cottontail):

Oct. 28–Nov. 25 and Dec. 26–Feb. 10, 2001
(4 daily, 8 possession)

Pheasant:

Male Only – Oct. 28–Nov. 25
Male and female in designated areas – Oct. 28–Nov. 25 and Dec. 26–Feb. 10, 2001
(2 daily, 4 in possession)

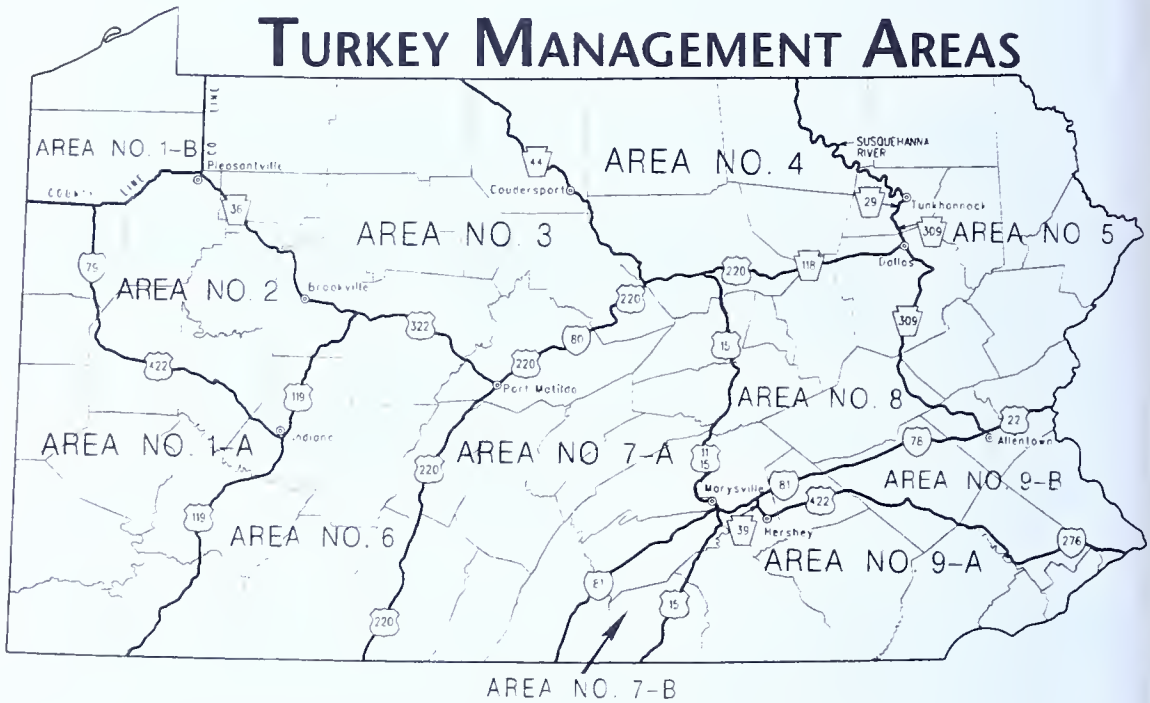
Bobwhile Quail: Oct. 28–Nov. 25
(Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)
(4 daily, 8 possession)

Varying (Snowshoe) Hares: Dec. 26–30 (2 daily, 4 possession)

Woodchucks (Groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1–Nov. 26 and Dec. 29–April 1, 2001, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. No limit.

Starlings and English Sparrows: Unlimited. No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.



Wild Turkey (Male or Female): (1 bird limit, either sex)

Management Areas:

1A, 1B and 2	Oct. 28–Nov. 11
Area 7B	Oct. 28–Nov. 4
Areas 3, 4, 5, 6, 7A and 8	Oct. 28–Nov. 18
Area 9A	Oct. 30–Nov. 1
Area 9B	Oct. 28–Nov. 4

Spring Gobbler: April 28, 2001–May 26, 2001. One bearded bird only.

Black Bear: Nov. 20–Nov. 22. One per day and season.

Deer, Statewide

Archery, Antlered: One antlered deer.** Sept. 30–Oct. 20, Oct. 25–Nov. 11 and Dec. 26–Jan. 13, 2001.

Archery, Antlerless: Sept. 30–Nov. 11 and Dec. 26–Jan. 13, 2001. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Regular Firearm, Antlered: One antlered deer.** Nov. 27–Dec. 9.

Regular Firearm, Antlerless: Nov. 27–Dec. 9. Junior and Senior License Holders, and Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) Holders only. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Regular Firearm, Antlerless: Dec. 9–12. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Flintlock, Antlerless: Oct. 21–24. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Flintlock, Antlered or Antlerless: Dec. 26–Jan. 13, 2001. One antlered ** or one antlerless and an additional antlerless with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Special Regulations Areas: (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties)

Antlered: Nov. 27–Dec. 9. One antlered deer. **

Antlerless: Nov. 27–Dec. 12 and Dec. 26–Jan. 13, 2001. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, "Deer Damage Areas"

Antlerless: Nov. 27–Dec. 9. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license only on those lands designated by the Executive Director as "Deer Damage Areas" and posted with approved signs.

** only one antlered deer (buck) with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season. Under no circumstance is any hunter entitled to take more than one antlered deer in a license year.

Furbearers, Hunting

Raccoon and Foxes: Unlimited, Oct. 14–Feb. 24, 2001.

Coyote, Opossum, Skunk and Weasel: Unlimited. No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons.

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3): One per permit. Oct. 14-Feb. 24, 2001. Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Harvest Permit.

Furbearers, Trapping

Mink and Muskrat: Unlimited, Nov. 18–Jan. 14, 2001.

Coyote, Fox, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunk, Weasel: Oct. 15–Feb. 24, 2001, unlimited.

Beaver (Statewide): Limits vary depending on Furbearer Management Zone, Dec. 26–March 31, 2001.

Bobcat (Fubearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 15-Feb. 24, 2001. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Harvest Permit.)

Elk video wins prestigious awards

THE GAME Commission's video, "Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies," recently won three awards from the prestigious 23rd International Wildlife Film Festival. In addition to being selected as a Finalist, the video also earned the Merit Award for Educational Value and the Merit Award for Conservation Message. "This is a great honor for the Game Commission and the employees who worked to make this video possible," said Vern Ross, Commission Executive Director.

Preliminary judging panels viewed 254 entries representing 20 countries in 17 categories. On average, only about 20 percent of entries per category were advanced to the final round.

"Entering these contests gives our videos worldwide recognition," said PGC Information Specialist Hal Korber, the videographer and producer of the video. "It provides a whole new audience the ability to view the work of the Game Commission. These projects are the product of a tremendous amount of teamwork, from law enforcement officers to land managers, and from biologists to interested citizens who have volunteered their time and energy."

Scripted by renowned nature writer Scott Weidensaul, the elk video is the third major video developed and produced by the Game Commission. Hosted by biologist Rawley Cogan, it focuses on elk history, biology and management and covers areas of interest including rutting behavior, calf survival, range expansion, social issues and how elk have responded to habitat improvements on their range.

"Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies" may be ordered from the Game Commission, Department MS, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. The cost is $29.24; Pa residents add 6% state sales tax.

OH2 Photo Contest

IN CONJUNCTION with Outdoor Heritage 2000 held in Huntingdon this past May, the Game Commission and *Westsylvania* magazine are sponsoring a photo contest. Contest categories are: "Watchable Wildlife," the animals must be alive and in their natural habitat; "Pennsylvania Outdoor Heritage," subjects must be historic and outside; "People Enjoying the Outdoors," they can be in a park, on the water, even in a tree, just so they're doing something naturally; and "Magic of the Mountains," an open category to recognize photographic talent and artistic flair.

Winners in each category will receive prizes valued at more than $300, with a grand prize package valued at more than $2,000.

Photographs must be slides, transparencies or 8x10 prints. Also, the photographs must have been taken in Adams, Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cumberland, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, Somerset, Washington or Westmoreland counties.

For more information write Outdoor Heritage 2000 Photo Contest, P.O. Box 565, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648, or call 814-696-9380. Entries must be postmarked by December 1, 2000.

New Game Lands/Lease-Land exchange generates revenue

AT THE APRIL meeting, the Game Commission approved six land purchases, three land exchanges and two lease-land exchanges that will add 6,562 acres to the state game lands network. The six purchases will add 4,380 acres to state game lands in Blair, Erie, Huntingdon, McKean and Schuylkill counties.

Following is a county breakdown of the land purchases approved:

Blair County: Two tracts totaling 1,262 acres have been approved for purchase for $315,500 from the Chandeim Corporation. The land includes nearly 200 acres of reclaimed surface mine, 80 acres of reverting fields, and 5 acres of wetlands. The properties will be added to SGL 198, which currently consists of 7,197 acres.

Erie County: For $64,400, the Game Commission will purchase from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy 161 acres adjacent to SGL 109. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide $48,500 in cost-share funds for the property, which includes 95 acres of wetlands. In addition to ensuring additional lands for public hunting, this new tract will also provide an access road to SGL 109, which currently contains 1,676 acres.

Huntingdon County: Commissioners approved the purchase of 150 acres for $20,000, from the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy. The property will become part of SGL 112, which currently contains 6,438 acres.

Huntingdon County: For $1.075 million, the Game Commission will purchase 2,688 acres from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The property will become a new state game land, SGL 322. The land was originally purchased as a cooperative venture between the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Conservation Fund, and received a Key 93 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The property is mainly forested and includes 10 acres of wetlands and 8 acres of reverting fields.

"The most important aspect of this particular purchase is that this land had previously been posted property," said Greg Grabowicz, Bureau of Land Management director. "This purchase is a clear demonstration that the Game Commission is committed to furthering its goal of opening new lands to public hunting."

McKean County: Commissioners approved the purchase of 3.36 acres and 10.67 acres from the Seneca Highlands Conservancy for $2,500. Both tracts are forested wetlands and adjacent to SGL 301, which currently contains 1,768 acres.

Schuylkill County: Commissioners approved the purchase of 105 acres adjacent to SGL 106, from the Wildlands Conservancy for $42,000.

Land exchanges add additional 870 acres to SGL system

In addition to the land purchases, the Commissioners approved three land exchanges, in Mercer, Elk and Lebanon counties, that will result in a net gain of more than 870 acres. By releasing 47 acres — much of which is unhuntable — the Commission will acquire 918 new acres.

Mercer County: In exchange for 5.34 acres of SGL 270, Dale W. Deist, Buck Fabricating president, will con-

vey to the Game Commission 22 acres to SGL 270. The exchange will enable Buck Fabricating to expand its current facilities. The 5.34 acres being exchanged are in a safety zone. The 22 acres the Game Commission will receive is excellent habitat, including reverting fields, woodlots and wetlands. Because the property was originally purchased by the Game Commission with funds provided through "Project 70," the exchange will require approval by the General Assembly before taking effect.

Elk County: In exchange for 5.4 acres of SGL 28 in Elk County, a group of 27 cabin owners will cost-share with the Game Commission the purchase of 635 acres in Muncy Creek Township, Lycoming County, and Lewis Township, Northumberland County. The cabin owners will provide $144,000 and the Game Commission will provide $173,000 toward the purchase of the land from the Muncy Borough Municipal Authority. The 5.4 acres of state game lands being exchanged are small parcels surrounding privately owned cabins. The 635 acres are in an area of southern Lycoming County/northern Northumberland County that currently does not have much public land for hunting. In addition, the new area has good public access and is comprised mainly of former farmlands and woodlots.

Lebanon County: Commissioners approved a land exchange with the Sheridan Corporation in which Sheridan would receive 36 acres of SGL 156 in Cornwall Borough in exchange for two wooded tracts totaling 262 acres to add to SGL 156. Sheridan plans to construct a rock crusher and conveyor system on the 36 acres. This parcel is primarily rock piles, which make for poor wildlife habitat. Additionally, there will not be any safety zone encroachment on the surrounding area of SGL 156. The exchange also will provide two new access roads to SGL 156. In addition, the Game Commission will acquire the mineral rights from Sheridan for the existing game lands in Cornwall Borough.

Commissioners approved a 150-acre lease agreement on SGL 112 with U.S. Silica Company of Berkley Springs, West Virginia, that will result in a $2.8 million royalty payment for the Game Commission, 1,311 new acres and better access roads for SGL 71 in Huntingdon County.

Under the lease agreement, U.S. Silica will be permitted to apply to the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to surface mine and remove approximately 12.7 million tons of sandstone from a 150-acre portion of SGL 112. If approved by DEP, the project will be performed in increments over the next 25 years

At the completion of the mining lease, U.S. Silica will reclaim and revegetate the property. "The current terrain on this 150-acre parcel is diffi-

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

cult for hunters to access," said Greg Grabowicz. "When the lease expires and we get this property back, it will be more conducive for both hunters and wildlife."

Commissioners also approved an addendum to a deep-mining mineral lease with Coolspring Stone Supply of Uniontown, Fayette County. Under the lease addendum, Coolspring will remove more than 1 million tons of limestone from beneath a 10-acre parcel of SGL 51. In exchange, Coolspring will provide the Game Commission with a royalty payment estimated at $253,068, including a $60,000 up-front payment. The deep-mining project is not expected to have an impact on the surface.

In other action, the Commission:

- Promulgated rules and regulations to allow landowners enrolled in the Forest Cooperative Program the ability to provide hunters an opportunity to take deer that enter exclosure areas. This new rule will assist in forest regeneration efforts.
- Adopted a policy to provide "whistleblower" protection for any Game Commission member or employee from reprisal for disclosing violations, abuses or improper activities. This new policy is consistent with a recommendation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management Assistance Team (MAT) Report.
- Established a policy for advertising in agency publications and on the homepage, www.pgc.state.pa.us.
- Created a "Commissioner Recognition Award" to allow Commissioners to present awards to up to two Pennsylvanians or organizations for meaningful contributions to wildlife.
- Proposed moving the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area controlled Canada goose hunting blind drawing from the second Wednesday in August to the second Wednesday in September, to provide hunters more time to apply and to ensure hunters can review federal waterfowl seasons, which are released in early September, before they apply.
- Proposed not holding the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area special deer hunt in conjunction with the late archery/muzzleloader deer season, to ensure safer hunting conditions.
- Gave preliminary approval to require residents to reach their 65th birthday in the "year of application" before they qualify for senior licenses. The "year of application" is defined as July 1 through June 30.
- Clarified that "unsold antlerless deer licenses" will be stamped "for use on private lands only." The stamped licenses may be used only on private land and public land with a deer management plan approved by the Game Commission.
- Commissioners took action to change the status of several roads on state game lands located in Huntingdon, Blair, Perry and Cumberland counties. Many of the changes will provide increased access to certain areas during hunting seasons. In some cases, road use will change from only during certain hunting seasons to being open year round. Similar action was approved for a section of roadway located on SGL 59 in Potter County.
- Approval was given to establish a permanent propagation area of approximately one acre near Lake Warren on SGL 56 in Bucks County. The area will serve as an alternative nesting site for the red-bellied turtle, a threatened species. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has cooperated in measures to provide attractive habitat on the area.
- Set the next Commission meeting for June 20 and 21.

Middle Creek & Pymatuning programs

AN EXCELLENT lineup of programs is on tap at the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas this month.

At Middle Creek on June 7-8, noted naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul talks about how and why birds migrate, and the conservation challenges that face them.



On June 21-22, nature enthusiast Fred Habegger presents his "Butterfly Haunts and Habitats" program.

Programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville.

At Pymatuning on June 10, visitor center staff present a video and discussion on the otter and fisher reintroduction programs.

On June 17, wildlife pest specialist and radio personality Trapper John Columbo will be on hand to give tips on controlling pesky critters.



On June 24, a video will be shown on the Game Commission's efforts to restore and manage its elk population.

Programs are also free at Pymatuning. They start at 2 p.m. and are held at the visitors center located near Linesville.

Time to think "LINK"

LINK is a new Game Commission program designed to match sportsmen looking for places to hunt and trap with landowners looking for help to control deer, goose, beaver and other wildlife populations. For hunters and trappers, and landowners, interested in participating in this program, now is the time to sign up.

LINK is designed to help landowners direct hunting or trapping pressure to land not otherwise open to public hunting or trapping. Landowners who participate in the program are not bound to open their property to public hunting and trapping, nor must they open their property to every hunter interested in coming there. Also, participating landowners are not committed to any long-term agreement.

Landowners are asked to fill out a form listing details that would be of interest to hunters and trappers (See following pages).

Interested hunters and trappers may then access these landowner listings through the Hunter Information Section of the Game Commission homepage (www.pgc.state.pa.us).

After finding a property they would be interested in visiting, hunters and trappers then would complete a "Hunter/Trapper Information and Profile Form," (See following pages) and mail it to the landowner.

Landowner Participation Forms and Hunter/Trapper Information and Profile Forms are also available from the agency's homepage or by writing Pennsylvania Game Commission, LINK Program, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Forms also are available through Game Commission offices and PSU Extension Service offices.

Landowner Information & Property Profile Form

I understand the information I provide on this form will be used to profile my property as a hunting or trapping site in the **Hunter/Trapper-Landowner Link Program.** That information will be available primarily on the Game Commission's Internet homepage. I also understand hunters will write me seeking permission to hunt or trap on my property, and that I may refuse them. It's understood I will not charge any fee to hunters or trappers seeking permission to access my land. Early form submissions ensure the greatest chance for hunter/trapper participation. Send this form to: Pennsylvania Game Commission, ATTN: LINK Program, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Information: (Please Print)

Name (optional)_____ Telephone _____

County _____ Township _____

Address _____

Property: Acreage _____ Wooded Acreage _____ Dam/Pond/Creek _____

Species in abundance:_____

Description of Property: (farming, woodlot, suburban, mountainous) _____

_____

Hunting or trapping opportunities limited to these species _____

_____

Hunting/Trapping Limitations:

Daily Registration _____ Saturdays Only _____ Tree Stands Allowed _____

Bow and Arrow Only _____ Maximum Daily Number of Hunters _____

No snares _____ No body-gripping traps _____ No foot-hold traps _____

Other Limitations: _____

Why Should Hunters/Trappers Come?_____

_____

_____

Hunter/Trapper Information & Profile Form

I understand the information I provide on this form will be reviewed by those landowners participating in the **Hunter/Trapper-Landowner Link Program** that I send it to. The information I have provided on this form is both truthful and factual. I also understand that a landowner may reject my request for permission to hunt for whatever reason. It's also understood I will not be charged a fee to access a landowner's property.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Information (Please Print)

Name _____ County _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Background Information:

Age _____ Years Hunting Experience _____ Years Trapping Experience _____

Hunter-Trapper Education Course _____ PA. Hunting License Number _____

Advanced Bowhunter Education Course _____

Hunting/Trapping /Conservation Club Affiliations:_____

_____

Hunting/Trapping Preferences (by species): _____

_____

Provide a brief statement about why a landowner should consider entrusting you with the privilege of hunting or trapping on his or her property:

_____

_____

Free to attach additional background information with this form.

Permissible muzzleloader projectiles clarified

AT THE APRIL meeting, the Commissioners adopted a change to the types of bullets allowed during the flintlock muzzleloader seasons. This action allows hunters to use what are commonly referred to as a "mini-ball," which is a lead conical projectile with a concave base, without a sleeve; and a "maxi-ball," which is a lead conical projectile with a solid base, without a sleeve.

"While some discussion surfaced about allowing the use of a 'sabot,' or plastic sleeve, explained executive director Vern Ross, "the language that was adopted did not make reference to such a device.

The 2000-2001 flintlock muzzleloader seasons are Oct. 21, 23 and 24, when hunters (with an antlerless deer license) may pursue only antlerless deer; and Dec. 26 through Jan. 13, when hunters still in possession of a valid deer tag may pursue either an antlered or antlerless deer.

Deer research studies begun

TO LEARN more about deer productivity, the Game Commission has started a research project to evaluate birth dates, pregnancy rates, and litter sizes of different age classes of female deer, and to evaluate mortality rates and causes of mortality of newborn fawns through their first year.

Two study sites have been chosen; one is in poor quality deer range, the Quehanna Wild Area at the junction of Elk, Cameron and Clearfield counties, and the other site is in higher quality deer range in Penn's Valley and Brush Valley in eastern Centre County.

In cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State, up to 80 fawns (40 at each site) are to be captured and equipped with breakaway radio collars and ear tags. Collars will also be fitted with mortality sensors that change the signal pulse when the collar remains motionless for four hours.

Deer will be released where they are found, and the signals from the collars will be monitored daily until the transmitters fall off. If a deer dies, the collar signal will alert the research team, which will try to find the carcass and determine why and when the fawn died.

"We hope to learn how many fawns die each year and determine what is causing their death," explained Gary Alt. "Is it because of predators? If so, which type of predator?"

The first phase of the project was to begin in May and run through the winter of 2000-01. The second phase will begin in May of 2001 and continue through the winter of 2001-02. No restrictions will be placed on harvesting a deer with radio collars or ear tags. However, hunters are encouraged to contact the PGC, at the toll-free number printed on the collars and tags.

"Not only are there no restrictions on harvesting the deer from our study group, hunters should not feel they should pass on the opportunity to legally harvest one of these deer," Alt said. "One objective of this study is to identify the harvest rates of the deer we collar and tag."

25-Year Club

The Game Commission enjoys a tremendous spirit of dedication among its employees. Here are the most recent PGC employees to complete a quarter century of service.

Thomas K. McKenrick,
Game Lands
Maintenance Worker
Coudersport



Carol Patterson
Clerical Supervisor
Southcentral Region
Alexandria





Daniel E. Marks
I & E Supervisor
Northcentral Region
Montoursville

Michael Kammerdiener
Forestry Regional
Supervisor
New Florence





Anthony W. Auston
Game Lands
Maintenance Supervisor
Sweet Valley

Eugene R. Weiner, Jr.
Land Management
Officer
Cambra





Samuel Roth
Game Lands
Maintenance Worker
Fountainville

Harry W. Yoder
Game Lands
Maintenance Worker
Saegertown





David M. Fichtner
Wildlife Maintenance
Propagator
Townville

Kevin L. Richards
Equipment Operator
Jersey Shore



Also attaining 25 year's service is Arlene D. Williams, Administrative Assistant, Harrisburg.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Legacy

LEGACY is a funny word, an old-fashioned word. A legacy is something that heroes (and sometimes villains) of Victorian books had inherited, that let them operate freely in the story's action, without being burdened by a real job. At least authors used to use that convenient way of accounting for their characters not going to work, and to have all day to hang around fashionable resorts, creating or solving mysteries.

But I've lately begun to think about my own legacy. Not any that I have inherited — nor do any money fortunes await — but what I might leave behind. Perhaps the fact that *Modern Maturity* magazine now comes into our home, along with the *Pennsylvania Game News*, or that the grays sneaking into the blonde are now too many to be plucked or combed under, has me realizing that one day I won't be here.

When I'm gone, what will I have left behind? What good will it do and how can I be sure it will do the kind of good I want it to? What if I want my legacy to reflect my appreciation of and concern about the outdoor sports, wildlife and wild lands, and want to help ensure these continue? How can I accomplish that?

When most of us think of a legacy, our first thought is undoubtedly money. Leaving a financial legacy may be an option, and you don't have to be a multi-millionaire. Every little bit helps for wildlife. You can designate some portion of your estate to go to a nonprofit organization — such as your favorite conservation group or groups — or even to the Game Commission.

Monetary donations or bequests to the Game Commission can be placed in the Game Fund, for general use, or you can designate them for the land acquisition and/or habitat management programs, if you wish. Steve Kline, PGC Budget Analyst, says it's wise to contact the commission beforehand.



Bob Steiner

If your finances allow you to make a donation now, rather than waiting until after you're gone, you'll have the pleasure of knowing your gift is already at work for wildlife and get to see some of the results of your own legacy.

There may be some tax advantages, according to how you make your gift or bequeath. Definitely consult your tax adviser or accountant and/or your lawyer. You can focus your legacy on your particular interest, whether it is wild birds or preserving wild lands, or maybe support wildlife re-

search or education in general. Contact appropriate nonprofit organizations, many of which have individuals whose job is working with people like you who want to donate, while they are living or posthumously, to the group's mission. These folks can help you tailor your bequest to suit your intentions, as well as your finances.

If you have wildlands suitable to become a new game lands or an addition to an existing game lands, you can leave that legacy to the Game Commission and citizens of the state. Even if your property won't work as a game lands (perhaps it's a lot in town), you can will it to the commission and let them use the money generated by the property's sale. However, says PGC Attorney Bill Pouss, the commission must approve any land donation, so you'll want to work with your lawyer and the commission ahead of time.

Another option is to cooperate with the commission or a conservancy to purchase and donate specific lands for game lands. Contact the PGC Bureau of Land Management to find out about their game lands acquisition needs. Conservation and recreation easements donated or willed to the commission are also options, where the property can be sold privately, but the commission maintains restrictions on land use and management and allows for public access. Again, work with your attorney and the Game Commission to meet the agency's needs and fulfill your wishes.

You may want other conservation, recreation or public entities to be the focus of your gift or bequest. But be sure that the intended recipient will use the land and/or money as you want. In my county a woman left acreage for a public recreation area and money to develop it, in a section that was lacking such a facility. The county commissioners voted not to accept the bequest for that use, as they didn't want the county to have to pay for upkeep of the facility. Instead, the money left to the county and that generated from the sale of the property went into a scholarship fund, which was another option in her will. That's a good use, but if she had been dreaming of a place in her neighborhood where children could play and enjoy the outdoors, and thought she had established that in her will, she was wrong. The kids there still don't have a park.

Maybe you don't want to will your land away from your family, or leave your family or other loved ones out of realizing a financial sum by the sale of the land after your death. But you don't want your woods or your farm to be broken up and sold into subdivision lots, paved over and neon-lit as a superstore parking lot. You know that if that happens, you'll surely turn over in your grave.

I talked to one sportsman who was bemoaning that development was encroaching on his family farm. Although no longer in agricultural use, it had a farmhouse, barn and outbuildings, and reverting field and various-age woodlands. He grew up on that ground, and he and his relatives still hunted it (he even invited me to the place). He said he didn't want the 300 acres split up after they were all gone.

I was just starting to suggest seeing a lawyer about a deed restriction, when he said, "We're way ahead of you on that." He told me that several years ago the family had put such a restriction on the deed, on what part of the land could be built on and how much had to be left in a natural state or used for agriculture. The land could be sold, but he could rest easy that it couldn't become "citified."

Besides money and property, is there any other way you can leave a legacy for wildlife conservation and the outdoor sports? Perhaps you are already leaving one. If not, you can begin today, building a different kind of legacy that will live after you. The best gifts to the future may not be bequeathing what you own, but a lasting remembrance of who you were and what you did, and how it affected those who came after.

When outdoor writer Charlie Nehf

Linda Steiner was recently honored with the Conservation Communicator Award for the year 2000 by the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation — the educational arm of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

As executive director of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, her efforts in editing and writing features for *Pennsylvania Wildlife* and her column in *Pennsylvania Game News*, and, among many other endeavors, her role as a regional contributor for *Keystone Conservationist*, Linda is a most deserving recipient of this award.

died, what I heard was "he helped found the Wildlands Conservancy." What a great legacy! I never met Charlie, but I did briefly meet Ned Smith, before he passed away. Ned's work in wildlife art and nature writing will stand for many years to come, I'm sure, providing both education and entertainment in the depiction of the wild world. I know that many folks save *Game News* (some sportsmen confess to boxes of them in their attic), and maybe even my words and photos will continue to be enjoyed and mean something to those who might rediscover them later.

What are your talents, and how can you leave something meaningful behind to benefit the outdoors you love? Many organized programs and clubs are just crying for volunteers, even — or maybe especially — your local sportsmen's group. Are you a part of their Youth Field Day or Junior Conservation Camp or other public educational event? If they don't have one, why don't you organize it? Or perhaps become a Hunter/Trapper Education Instructor and pass on your knowledge and feeling for the outdoors to another generation.

One-on-one mentoring is a great legacy. The biggest expenditure you must make is your time and, to be effective, lots of it. After a club's one-day educational, hands-on, youth outdoors event is over, where do the young people go from there? What is needed to keep the outdoor sports alive is for upcoming generations to love them as much as we do. And that takes the commitment of time.

What youngsters need most is someone to show them the way, a trusted adult, a neighbor, a relative, to remember to invite the young person along. And not only once, not just for Pennsylvania's special youth squirrel or waterfowl hunt, but throughout the seasons and even in the off-seasons, for a walk in the woods. Your knowledge of and your feeling for wild things and our hunting heritage will shine through in your words and actions.

I admit I'm imperfect in building this kind of legacy. Two of my nieces barely tolerate that their dad and their aunt and uncle hunt. But I've got a nephew who has spent several antlerless seasons with us and who shot his first deer here. His essay, "Hunting Hound," appeared in the yearbook of a Bergen County, New Jersey, high school. Although living so close to New York City, Jamie said that "two of my favorite pastimes are hunting and fishing." In his essay, he told the story of his hunting experiences with us and summed up by saying:

"I am sure many of you reading this article have varied feelings about fishing, and/or hunting. Many of my friends have expressed their disapproval, but I have felt positively about these activities, for I have never been on a hunting expedition where there was mistreatment of the animal being shot or caught; the animal was always treated with great reverence and respect. These regulated methods of harvesting game are essential to the preservation of this country's beautiful game lands for present and future generations to enjoy."

When I read that, I felt that if I leave no other legacy behind, that would be enough, to have touched another's heart in just the way I would wish. And maybe, critiquing the phrasing, he has inherited his aunt's bent for writing, too. □

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Planning is an essential part of a LMO's job, because what we do this month will impact hunters this fall and wildlife this winter.

THE FIRST DAY of summer occurs in June, but here it looks, feels and smells like summer many days before the 21st. Hunting season and winter seem a long way off, but many things we do on game lands this month will impact hunters this fall and wildlife this winter.

Planning is an important part of this job. All of the major work we hope to accomplish over the next year has been planned. Every February we LMOs prepare annual work plans for our groups to cover the next fiscal year, July 1 through June 30. Upon completion, these plans are reviewed by the regional land management supervisor (Keith Harbaugh here in the Northwest Region), and also by Harrisburg land management staff. These plans help us to apply for Pittman-Robertson funds, the tax on sporting arms and ammunition. The work we accomplish this month will finish up what was on last year's annual work plans, and the work we start next month will begin the work on the new plans.

Week One

I spend the first three days of the month at a region conference. All WCOs, LMOs and region office personnel get together at a rustic conference center in southern Jefferson County. Up to 50 of us, we attend training meetings all day, keep a fireplace going for heat, cook our own meals, and stand in long lines to use one of the site's two bathrooms. Entertainment — aside from the occasional bat or snake — is a trap shooting competition in the evening. It sounds worse than it actually is, except for all the snoring at night with 40 men sleeping in one large open room (then it is worse than it sounds). Hardly a vacation, it is time away from the phone and computer, in a relaxed atmosphere, and a chance to receive some excellent training.

The main work of the food and cover crews during the first week in June is to continue planting food plots on game lands. The crews have all the plots plowed, and most of them disked and planted. Equipment breakdowns and bad weather often impact our work, though. A rainstorm can set us back days, as we have to let the plots dry out before planting them. We left one tractor on a game lands overnight, because we didn't quite finish planting, and when we came back the next morning, we found someone had tried to set it on fire, stole the fire extinguisher, burnt the dashboard, and stuffed rags in the engine belts. From now on we'll have to transport the tractors to a secure place overnight.

We continue to mow strips through our rabbit areas, to keep the vegetation lush, and this week we'll start to fertilize the grass and legumes in these areas. We have some places that produce excellent rabbit hunting, so we put a lot of effort into maintaining the habitat in these management areas.

Saturday brings the Jefferson County

Youth Field Day, held annually at Renlow County Park. Many local outdoor agencies and sportsmen's groups come together during this day of outdoor learning for our youngsters. Each club or group hosts a learning station to expose kids to different outdoor activities, such as trapping, archery, .22 rifle, muzzleloading, fishing, etc. Kids up to age 17 are encouraged to participate in the activity at each station. I help with the "Seneca Fun-Run," a station established by our local WCOs, Mike Girosky and Roger Hartless, and hosted by several current and retired deputies. At this station kids compete in speed and accuracy in throwing tomahawks and spears, as well as test their outdoor knowledge through furbearer pelt identification. A couple of days before the event, the food and cover crew works with county park personnel to set up the area by mowing, putting down sawdust and moving tables. Foreman Everett Reitz and Scott Hepler of my crew, like most people at the event, volunteer their time to help run stations and teach kids outdoor traditions.

Part of my job requires me to assess the impacts highway work, bridge replacement, drilling and mining activities, and other land disturbances will have on wildlife.

Week Two

Clarion County foreman Gary Maxwell and I start the week off by meeting with District Conservationist Bernie Spozio to look at some sites that possibly can be restored to wetland wildlife habitat. Through "Partners for Wildlife" the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helps with funding to restore wetland areas, on public and private lands, that have been drained or filled in over the years. We have restored many wetland sites on game lands through this program, and today we inspect two sites on SGL 74.

At 10 p.m. I receive a call from the Northwest Region Office to assist WCO Roger Hartless. Roger explains that he noticed a truck on one of our game lands with a load of freshly cut black cherry trees. He was unable to catch up to the vehicle, but did get a description. We spend a few hours gathering evidence and looking for the vehicle before deciding that Roger will return at daylight to look for more evidence.

The following day I check the progress of a gas well being drilled on SGL 31 in Jefferson County. On this game lands we do not own the gas rights, only the surface rights. At this well, I'm monitoring the drilling progress and working with the company to enhance habitat near the site. The company agreed to seed the site and roadway to a grass and legume seed mix, create

Brad Myers



WETLANDS like this one on SGL 54 near Brockway have been restored through the Partners for Wildlife Program.

brushpiles and plant some apple trees. I find that only the brushpiles have been created, so I make a note to remind the foreman about the other work they agreed to do. I sometimes find that the company representative who works with me on the initial planning forgets to explain all the details to the work crews. Usually a call or two is all that's needed to clear up the confusion. While there I see a buck, and even though he's in velvet, the antlers are pretty big. By the time hunting season rolls around, he'll be one to put on the wall.

One morning on my way to SGL 63 in Clarion County, I notice a vehicle that matches the description of the one WCO Hartless and I were looking for. Being in an unmarked vehicle, I'm able to turn around and slowly pass by without being noticed. I cannot see the license plate, but I note as much information as I can. When I get to my destination, I relay the information to Roger. With help from regional forester Bob Bauer and Clarion County forester Steve Elmquist, we determine that $5,000 worth of timber had been stolen, and that $1,100 worth of damage to food plots and access roads had been done. WCO Hartless, Deputy Bruce Harbridge and I spend the night on stakeout, hoping the thieves return to pick up some logs they cut but couldn't fit on the truck. The evening passed uneventfully, however.

Bob Mitchell



Part of my job requires me to assess the impacts highway work, bridge replacements, drilling and mining activities, and other land disturbances will have upon wildlife. Today I'm assessing the impacts of a stripmine in Jefferson County. This site is not on game lands, but our input was requested by the Department of Environmental Protection. For this impact assessment, I walk the area and note and classify the habitat types I see in the area, such as wetlands, forest type, terrain, streams, springs and herbaceous openings. I document tree, grass and shrub species, rock outcroppings, caves, and other wildlife denning sites. I document all wildlife and wildlife signs that I see, such as nests, droppings, etc. The next step is to rate the habitat value for each species of wildlife found in the area. This rating goes from high value (unique habitat) to no value at all. I also note if there are any threatened or endangered species or their habitats.

Among the things I find on this site are mountain springs, scrub-shrub wetlands, and an area I believe to be a woodcock singing grounds. I also flushed a woodcock from an adjacent wet thornapple patch. Due to the decline in woodcock habitat throughout this area, I recommended to deny the permit for this project. This does not necessarily mean the project will be halted, although I hope my input will be given consideration. Even if the project proceeds, I know that I've been given the opportunity to submit my input for sportsmen and the resource.

Week Three

Foreman Gary Maxwell and I attend a timber showing on SGL 283. A timber showing is a day when our agency invites potential buyers to meet and look over an area where the timber is to be cut and sold.

THE Youth Field Day "Seneca Fun-Run" allows kids to compete in speed and accuracy in throwing tomahawks.



A. Pedder

WCO ROGER HARTLESS helps a youngster at the furbearer pelt identification station that's part of the "Seneca Fun-Run" at a Youth Field Day event.

This gives us an opportunity to explain some of the details of the sale, such as roadwork, stone pits, herbaceous openings to be created and seeded. This also gives potential buyers an opportunity to ask questions. Four buyers attend this showing. They were given a sale packet, which included maps of the sale area. Regional forester Bob Bauer then led us all on a tour of the sale area. As we are leaving the timber showing, we spot a doe with twin fawns, the first I've seen this year.

Our spring planting complete, the crew will spend the rest of the week catching up on some small jobs and equipment maintenance. Oil changes, filters and minor adjustments are needed to get our tractors ready for the mowing season. We also pull our brush-hog type mowers in to be serviced and attached to the tractors. We do most of our mower servicing in the winter, but minor repairs always seem to be needed. While some members of the crew are working on equipment, the others will start to drive through our grassy roads and herbaceous openings to cut and remove downed trees and limbs. We do this to clear the way for the mowing tractors. This is also a good time for the guys to carry a "potato hook" and remove any leaves or limbs that may be clogging our road culverts. I remind the crews to be careful driving on our grassy roads this time of year. Hen turkeys with poults are "bugging" heavily in these areas, and it's easy to run over poults without knowing it. If I see an adult turkey while driving one of these grassy roads, I stop immediately and get out. More times than not I find eight or nine little ones scampering out from around the truck.

Week Four

Foreman Everett Reitz, Gary Maxwell and I attended supervisor training at the region office in Franklin. Meanwhile, the crews begin what will be a month and a half of mowing.

Most of our mowing is done with tractors with brush-hog type mowers. Mowing on game lands is an enjoyable task for us, and we see a tremendous amount of wildlife, but after nearly two months of it, the guys are ready to get back on the ground and move on to other things.

The end of the month brings vehicle problems, as two of our trucks go down in one day. We had a gas tank strap break on one of the older trucks, creating a hole in the tank, and an air compressor bolt sheared off on the rollback truck. These are not major breakdowns, but we have to stop mowing to pick up parts, work on vehicles, or make arrangements to deliver a vehicle to be serviced. In this case one truck is down because a new gas tank had to be ordered.

I've seen hen turkeys with poults on every game lands I've been to this month; they seem to be everywhere.

The end of June also marks the end of the fiscal year. I spend a couple of days on the computer and typewriter, completing monthly and annual reports. As I've said before, reports are not pleasant, but are necessary to keep the wheels of government, especially the Game Commission, rolling. □

Most landmarks are named after people or places, but it's not surprising that Marcia named her homemade benches on her trails after wildlife.

"Naming the Benches"

GETTING OLDER is not a condition I like to admit to. Putting benches beside our trails, as my husband Bruce wanted to do, struck me as an acknowledgment that time, for us, was marching on. I preferred to sit at the base of a tree, at one with nature.

"Well, I'm getting older," Bruce said, "and I want benches to sit on."

So late in the winter of '99, Bruce consulted with two hunter friends, Jeff and Bob, who are also talented carpenters. Jeff's garage is not only a display area for all the racks from bucks he, his family and friends have killed over the years, but a fully equipped workshop as well. The deal was that we would purchase the pressure treated lumber and Jeff and Bob would build the benches, assisted by Bruce and our son Dave. Those benches would be available for us and for visitors and hunters to use throughout the year. As it turned out, Bruce and Dave mostly kibitzed while Bob and Jeff turned out — in record time —



four handsome benches, complete with slanted backs and armrests.

By the first week in April, after much discussion of where we should put them, Bruce had installed three of the four benches. Despite my initial objections to the benches, I quickly found myself arranging my walks around them, arriving at one just in time for my morning coffee and bagel, which I carried in my backpack. Although such indulgence seemed faintly sybaritic, I had no trouble adjusting to it.

At first the benches were named according to their locations — Far Field Road Bench, Ten Springs Trail Bench, and Hollow Road Bench — but within a week they had new names.

The first to be renamed was the Ten Springs Trail Bench, which Bruce had installed at the edge of our clearcut done in 1991. It overlooks the mature uncut deciduous forest of Laurel Ridge.

On a warm, sunny April morning, I walked through Margaret's Woods to the 8-year-old clearcut along Greenbrier Trail, following the sound of a gobbling tom turkey. Using my old Lynch Foolproof box call, I tried to entice him into view. Finally, I glimpsed him ahead of me on the trail, slowly fanning his tail feathers. Even though I stood absolutely still, he spotted me after several minutes, stared as if in disbelief and then ran off up the slope.

From Greenbrier Trail, I hiked down Dogwood Knoll to Ten Springs Trail and the bench. As I sat there, I again heard a turkey gobbling and answered him with what I thought were enticing hen calls. We called back and forth as he moved unseen up Laurel Ridge. I never did see him, but it was marvelous just to be outside on such a glittering day with the red maple trees in full orange, gold and red flower, and the songs and calls of Carolina wrens, white-breasted nuthatches, cardinals, goldfinches and the newly arrived ruby-crowned kinglets blessing the morning. And that's how Ten Springs Trail Bench became Turkey Bench.

Two days later, on another sparkling spring morning, I walked down the road to Hollow Road Bench that overlooks our Plummer's Hollow stream and the forest beyond. I was just in time to watch and listen to two male Louisiana waterthrushes singing over prime Louisiana waterthrush habitat. These wood warblers are some of the earliest returning migrants and, with their brown backs, white breasts streaked with brown, and long pink legs, they look more like thrushes than warblers. Because they favor streambanks in wooded ravines for nesting, our hollow usually hosts three or four pairs.

At one point they stood on two fallen trees, a couple feet from where I was sitting, and chipped, swayed and wagged their tails up and down. Along with its white eyebrow stripe, the tail wagging is a definitive feature of the Louisiana waterthrush, and both its genus and species name (*Seiurus motacilla*)mean "tail-wagger."

As I sat still, they continued their performance, flying up and down above the stream, singing their melodious, ringing song, giving their sharp, metallic chip calls, and chasing one another, but I saw no real fighting. One waterthrush waded through the rushing water, feeding and singing, looking very much like a dipper I had once watched in a Wyoming stream.

Later, I consulted W. Douglas Robinson's account of the Louisiana waterthrush in *The Birds of North America* for an explanation of what I had seen. According to him, "Neighboring territorial males often engage in vigorous chases and countersinging soon after arrival on breeding grounds. Countersinging males move toward the territory boundary. Then one male often flies into neighboring territory, provoking a vigorous chase of swerving birds through woodland and along stream corridors. Males sing while in pursuit, extending the complex ending of their territorial songs to last several seconds. In some cases, males may land near each other and face off in a threat display."

That described exactly what I had seen. Needless to say, Hollow Road Bench was renamed Louisiana Waterthrush Bench and continued to give me a front seat view of Louisiana waterthrush behavior throughout the month.

It took another four days, until April 14, before the Far Field Road Bench received its new name. The previous evening the phone had rung at 7:30. My 85-year-old father's neighbor, 87-year-old John Stine, had some bad news. My father had fallen outside his country home while working in his garden and had lain for hours on the cold April ground, calling for help. Luckily, Mr. Stine had glanced out of his window and noticed my father lying there, several hundred feet away. We had spent much of that night at the hospital, learning, finally, that Dad had broken his hip.

The following morning I had a difficult time taking my usual morning walk because I was worried about Dad. I was wondering why he had broken his hip less than a year after he had fallen and broken his leg. But I forced myself outside that windy, cold day and headed for the Far Field Road Bench. Set along my favorite refuge on the property, it had already become my most used bench. I sat drinking my coffee and listening to a singing blue-headed vireo. Looking downslope into Roseberry Hollow, my mind was so busy with questions that I paid little attention to the scene around me.

What if Dad's neighbor had not gone to the window? How much longer could Dad live alone in his beloved country home? Would he survive his hip operation?

A slight movement to my right aroused me from my reverie. A coyote sensed me

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Canine Classification

Place the letter, (R) for red fox, (G) for gray fox, (C) for coyote or (CF) for all three, that belongs with the following statements.

1. _____ Belongs to *Canidae* family
2. _____ Found throughout all of Pennsylvania
3. _____ Marked similar to a German shepherd dog
4. _____ Largest canine in Pennsylvania
5. _____ Weighs 35-40 pounds
6. _____ Mainly nocturnal
7. _____ Opportunists
8. _____ Known to howl
9. _____ "Cross" fox
10. _____ Climbs trees
11. _____ White-tipped tail
12. _____ Dens in enlarged groundhog holes
13. _____ Generic name is *Vulpes*

answers on p. 64

at the same moment that I sensed it. It was fewer than 10 feet from the bench and had evidently been moseying along the old woods road as inattentive to its surroundings as I had been to mine.

He was a magnificent, full-grown male that looked me fully in the face for several seconds before turning around and loping slowly away. I don't have a mystic bone in my body. Yet when the coyote appeared so unexpectedly, I felt as if an unseen hand had blessed me. I remembered that many Native American tribes had venerated the coyote. The Crows called him First Workers, creator of the earth and all living creatures, and the desert southwest tribes referred to him as God's dogs.



~ Scarlet Tanager ~

Did the coyote know I needed a revelation? Or was his appearance, the first ever I had had of an adult coyote on our mountain, merely a coincidence? Surely the latter, my rational, scientific mind told me. But Dad did come through his hip operation beautifully, and the prognosis for a complete recovery was excellent. Immediately, I christened the Far Field Road Bench Coyote Bench in honor of God's dog.

It could have easily been named Snake Bench. On June 6, a day of rising temperatures and humidity, I trekked to Coyote Bench. The woods were filled with the rustling of gray squirrels and chipmunks, and I speculated that the predators, such as coyotes, would be eating well. Sitting on Coyote Bench, I heard crunching in the leaves behind me and turned to watch a large black rat snake sliding sinuously over the ground. It stopped frequently to raise its head as if seeking its way. Then it slithered down into a hollow log where, I assumed, a chipmunk had its den. Because it did not come out again, I could only speculate on its intent.

July 13 was beautiful, filled with the usual deep woods' singers — wood thrushes, scarlet tanagers, Acadian flycatchers and red-eyed vireos. My friend Colette and I walked along the Far Field Road, and as we neared Coyote Bench, we found not one, but two black rat snakes, fewer than five feet apart, basking in the sun. We sat on the bench and watched as one slowly crawled away, while the other moved slowly from one small patch of sunlight to another. Had one of those snakes been the one I had seen a month and a half before sliding into the hollow log? As usual, I was left with questions about my observations.

The fourth bench remained in the barn until mid-June. A twinge in my back reminded me that sometimes, when my back gives me trouble, I can't walk as far as I usually do. So I suggested that we put the bench in the "Magic Place," a short distance from our house. Nestled amid several nearly 200-year-old red and black oaks, it's the only bench that is not on a trail.

For less than a month we called it the Magic Place Bench. But on that same day in July, Colette and I sat there and watched a female box turtle watching us. Several weeks later Bruce was eyed by the same box turtle. "Let's call it Turtle Bench," he suggested. And we did.

I was surprised at how quickly and easily the wild animals named our benches. Now I look forward to the next set of benches Bruce is planning to have made. Who knows what critters they will be named for? □

By Tom Tatum

Bowhunting ethics involves respecting the rights of others and using some good old common sense. Here are some guidelines to ensure you . . .

Do the Right Thing

BUBBA BRATWORST couldn't believe his luck. The 10-point was feeding right toward his treestand. Well, actually it wasn't really his stand. It was a stand he had stumbled across that afternoon as he scouted this new territory. He had vague plans to try to find out who owned the property, and maybe get around to asking permission to hunt. But then Bubba's logic kicked in. Obviously, if there were already a treestand here, the property owner must permit hunting, so his being here shouldn't be any big deal. Bubba watched as the buck nonchalantly munched another acorn and drew a few steps closer.



Bubba nocked an arrow and fumbled with the mechanical release. He hadn't shot the bow since his cousin Boomer had given it to him last June, but he somehow managed to attach the release. Now the breeze was swirling and the buck tested the air. Bubba had barely drawn the bow when the buck snorted and bounded up the ridge. The deer was trotting through the laurel some 40 yards away when Bubba, with no time to aim, launched an arrow at him. The arrow glanced off a sapling and, incredibly, angled down through the fleeing buck's hip, severing a major artery. Bubba watched as the buck disappeared at full speed over the ridge. "Darn, another miss," he said aloud. He had left home that morn-

ing expecting to bag venison. He had even brought along his wife's license to tag it. Bubba brooded about his "bad luck" for another hour before a little forkhorn appeared on the trail some 50 yards away. It was twilight by now, too dark to see very well. Forgetting all about the 10-point, Bubba nocked another arrow and took aim.

Unfortunately, all of us have encountered at least one Bubba in our careers. Some of us may have even been a Bubba at some point in our lives. Bubba, of course, is an ethically challenged bowhunter. For the sake of the future of bowhunting, you certainly don't want Bubba out there destroying it for the rest of us, and you sure as heck don't want to be Bubba. If you can't list at least six unethical (not to mention a few illegal) acts that Bubba committed in the paragraphs above, I suggest you put down your bow and take up something less ethically demanding, like golf.

For some archers, the pursuit of deer is a casual pastime; for many more, though, it's a passion. For others it becomes an obsession where no hunting season can be considered a success until their license tags are filled. I know an awful lot of bowhunters who pursue their game with unbridled passion. For the most part, that's something I can admire and respect. But the problem with passion is that it can often cloud common sense and clear thinking. This can result in violations of the "rules of the game," both written and unwritten. While the digest published by the Game Commission addresses the legal aspects of hunting and taking game, there are other areas, perhaps a bit gray in places, where bowhunters need to be aware of ethical considerations and, ultimately, do the right thing. Let's take a look at some of these. One of the most critical ethical issues comes into play before we ever set foot in the woods.

Practice

More than with any other sporting arm used to take game, archery demands thorough practice and familiarity with equipment before even thinking about taking a shot at live game. Any handbook on bowhunting ethics should emphasize consistent clean kills. Without practice, this just isn't possible. Inadequate practice is a recipe for wounded game, and for the ethical bowhunter, that is just plain unacceptable. The rule of thumb is that you should be able to hit a 12-inch paper plate consistently at 20 yards before you can consider yourself truly ready for the real thing, and that includes practice with the broadheads you plan to use.

Of course you should prepare yourself for the shots you expect to take. Twenty yards or less is a good standard to set for yourself. For me, 30 yards is the outer limit of any shot I would attempt, and I practice all summer and during the season, at ranges and angles out to that distance. Make sure you practice from a treestand, too.

More than one bowhunter has practiced diligently at 3-D shoots and backyard hay bales all summer long, then, once the season began, had not taken a shot until November, when that buck finally appeared. Six weeks of rust can take its toll, and the result, too often, is a miss or a bad hit, and devastating disappointment. You have a responsibility to your quarry to be proficient with your equipment. This can happen only if you continue to practice all season.

Shot Selection

As bowhunters, we have an ethical obligation to attempt only the most prudent of shots. You should know your effective range and not attempt shots beyond that distance. Thirty yards is pretty much the maximum for most of us. Don't attempt shots at deer where the angle is wrong. If you're looking straight on at a deer's chest or rump, that's a no shot situation. For most of us, perfect broadside shots or slightly quartering away shots are the only ones acceptable. And, of course, the shot must be clear. Branches in the way at 10 yards?



Don't risk a deflection. Wait for a clear shot. Shots at running deer? No way. If you release any arrow at a deer where you have to cross your fingers and hope or pray, you've essentially just taken an uncertain, and thus unethical, shot — even if you end up tagging it.

Following Up Shots/Trailing Game

An obvious ethical necessity for bowhunters, and gun hunters as well, is following up every shot and trailing hit game as far as possible. I've trailed deer hit with an arrow for more than 200 yards, with precious little blood to follow, before recovering them. I've trailed them for a mile or two before finally accepting the fact that my hit wasn't fatal. That happens to all of us sooner or later. If you shoot a deer just before legal quitting time, be prepared to follow the blood trail by flashlight or lantern. If the game is not recovered in the dark, you are ethically committed to return to the trail in the morning and keep trying until you find the deer or are reasonably assured that it survived.

Trespassing

At first glance, this issue seems to be an ethical no-brainer. Hunting without permission or trespassing is never compatible with ethical bowhunting. If you're one of those rare archers who hunts exclusively on public lands, this doesn't apply to you, but if you're like most of us who hunt private land at least some of the time, chances are you've run into a Bubba or Boomer. Maybe you've even cheated a little at one time or another and struck up a kinship with Bubba.

Unlike noisy, orange-clad gun hunters, bowhunters, with their camouflage and intrinsically quiet sporting arm, can easily intrude, undetected, onto a property where they don't have permission to hunt. You probably know a bowhunter who has bagged a deer or two by sneaking onto property they couldn't get permission to hunt. This is ethically unacceptable. Just because you don't get caught doesn't make it right.

Almost as bad is the "ignorance is bliss" excuse. If you have permission to hunt a specific property, you don't automatically have the right to stray onto surrounding properties. You are responsible for knowing, at least within reason, all relevant property lines. I can't tell you how many times I've crossed paths with trespassing bowhunters who pleaded, unconvincingly, that they thought they were still hunting Mr. Brown's farm, when neighboring farmer Smith's property was clearly and heavily posted.

One evening a few years back I ran into one of Bubba's cousins in a small woodlot where I was one of just two people who

had earned permission to hunt. I had been on stand barely an hour when suddenly the woods exploded with a strange and extensive bawling and bleating sound, then I heard crashing and thrashing in the brush just beyond my field of vision. This went on, sporadically, for what seemed like a half hour. The racket had almost subsided when I noticed another bowhunter walking toward me with an arrow nocked. He was stalking something on the ground. Finally he drew his bow and fired. He then walked over to the deer he had wounded earlier and began field-dressing it, barely 40 yards away.

It was pretty clear that my hunt for the evening was over, so I descended from my treestand and approached him. He told me that he had permission to hunt on what turned out to be the adjacent property (but not the woods where he had just bagged the deer). "I thought this was all part of their property," he explained.

"Didn't you notice the posted signs?" I countered.

"Nope. Didn't see 'em," he responded in true Bubba fashion.

I took a look at the animal, a small 9-point. Bubba's first arrow had struck the buck in the ear and put it down writhing in agony. That was the source of all the commotion I had heard. "How did you manage to shoot him there?" I asked, not trying to disguise my disgust.

"A saw you down here and I could see he was heading in your direction. I knew I had to get off a shot before he got to you. I was just glad to hit him anyplace," he commented matter-of-factly.

"You shouldn't have worried about that," I said. "I would have passed him up."

The trespassing hunter finished field-dressing the buck and began dragging him back toward the other property. "I think you'd better tag him before you do that," I said.

"Oh . . . uh, yeah." He reluctantly tore the tag from his license, filled out the information and attached it to the deer. "Okay?" he pouted. I nodded and he resumed dragging his ill-gotten gain. "See you later," he said.

"Not on this property," I reminded him.

Taking a Stand

Hunters are intrinsically territorial, and bowhunters are no exception. Some of the most heavily posted properties are those that are posted by hunters who managed to get permission to hunt, and they sure as heck want to keep other hunters off of "their" properties. This is easy to understand, but let's say several hunters — not necessarily friends or acquaintances of each other — all have permission to hunt the same piece of land. Many of them do their preseason scouting and hang treestands at





likely locations. This can result in many ethical questions, not all of them easy to answer.

First, an easy one: No, it is not okay to claim possession of someone else's treestand. Unfortunately treestands seem to be stolen at an alarming rate. What makes it worse is that it's clearly other bowhunters who are doing the stealing — who else would have a use for them? Almost every bowhunter I know has lost a stand to theft. In many cases, these thefts occurred on private, posted property. The evidence, in most cases, strongly suggested that the perpetrators were bowhunters, trespassers and thieves, hardly a rousing endorsement of the integrity of too many of our bowhunting brethren. And no, it's not okay to take someone else's treestand as a payback for having one of yours stolen. That just perpetuates a vicious cycle.

What's the ethical thing to do in other treestand related situations? Here are a few recommendations:

If it's not your treestand, you have no right to use it unless you've received permission from the owner.

First come, first served applies to treestand placement. You should respect a kind of "safety zone" around existing treestands. Don't hang yours within, at the very minimum, 50 yards of an existing stand. If an existing stand is obviously dilapidated and out of use, the safety zone rule no longer applies.

If you're using a portable climbing stand, the rules are a little different. If experience and observation have demonstrated that a stand isn't being used at all or only at certain times, then the safety zone rule no longer applies. However, if you position yourself in your climbing stand and the hunter who owns the permanent stand shows up to hunt, it's your obligation to move, even if you weren't aware of the existing stand before the other hunter arrived.

The best approach is to learn the identities of the owners of the other stands (through the landowner) and communicate with each other, coordinating your hunting times and locations, so these kinds of conflicts don't arise.

Even when ethical considerations become situational, most of them can still be resolved by applying good old common sense. One day soon you may find yourself forced to make one of those tough, ethical decisions.

If one of your options involves something that you wouldn't want to tell your wife, mother, children, best friend or local WCO about, then your choice is easy, plain and simple. Just do the right thing — you'll know what it is.

And by the way, if you happen to see Bubba, pass the word. □

Looking for something different to try in the woodchuck fields this summer?

The Overlooked .22 BR Remington

"WHAT WILDCAT cartridge do you think would make a superaccurate chuck outfit? I have a Model 700 Remington .308 that was damaged in a car accident. The action and stock survived, but the barrel is bent. Because it will need a new barrel, I decided to go with a heavy barrel wildcat outfit."

"In all fairness, your question is impossible to answer. There are several excellent wildcat cartridges that could be used. The .219 Donaldson Wasp, .22 PPC and the .22 BR (Benchrest) Remington are superb 224-caliber varmint rounds. Also, both the 6mmPPC and the 6mm Remington BR offer incredible accuracy."



Helen Lewis

JIM PEIGHTAL, left, rechambered a .223 barrel from a Model 700 Remington to the .22 BR Remington wildcat. Stock is a H-S Precision Target Silhouette thumbhole and scope is a 6-24x Baush & Lomb.

"I want to stick with a .224 cartridge," he cut in. "I like the idea of using a 22-caliber cartridge for chuck hunting."

"Well, if that's a top consideration, I have no qualms in suggesting the Remington .22 BR. However, there are several drawbacks you might want to consider. One is cost of swaging and reloading dies, and the other is case making."

"I'm aware from reading your articles that wildcatting is usually more expensive than going the factory route. Now that I'm retired, I want to get more involved in reloading and shooting. What case is used for the .22 BR?"

"The .22 BR Remington is actually a factory wildcat. To the best of my knowledge, no factory ammunition is available for it. In the beginning, the .22 BR was made from the Remington benchrest case, which is actually a modified Winchester

.308 case with a small primer pocket. To go through all the steps necessary to form the .22 BR case required extensive forming dies and plenty of time and patience."

"If that's the case, maybe I should consider another wildcat," he said. "I don't want to go overboard on this project."

"I have good news, too" I jokingly told him. "The .22 BR Remington case is easily made by necking down the Remington 6mm BR case, which is a factory round. Brass is available, and the cost of the dies is not staggering."

After a long conversation he left, and I have no idea what he decided. This conversation took place about 10 years ago, when the .22 BR Remington was unknown to most varmint buffs. If the data I have is correct, Remington chambered for the .22 BR sometime in the late 1970s. Being a wildcatter, I finally decided to find out for myself if all the accuracy hoopla being printed about this cartridge was true. However, my plans for the wildcat never got off the ground.

For one reason or another, it wasn't until a few months ago that I got started with this project. I decided to rebarrel a Model 700 Remington .308 sporter with a heavy .223 Remington barrel that Jim Peightal had removed several years back when making a 6mm BR outfit. The .223 barrel was in good shape, and all he needed was a reamer. Dave Manson, president of Loon Lake Precision, Inc., 8200 Embury Rd., Grand Blanc, MI, handled Jim's request immediately, and my project was up and running.

Jim suggested contacting H-S Precision, Inc., 1301 Tulane Drive, Rapid City, SD, about their Silhouette Target Thumbhole synthetic stock. This particular stock is made for the ADL Remington, which has no floorplate, but the gun Jim and I had in mind was going to be a single-shot, so this stock would be fine. H-S Precision says that their Pro-Series stocks are hand laminated using hybrid composite materials and the latest manufacturing technologies. The composites, including Kevlar, unidirectional, carbon fiber, fiberglass, epoxy-based gel coats and laminating resins and structural polyurethane foam (freon-free) reinforced with milled fiberglass, are molded around an aluminum bedding block system that eliminates the need for conventional bedding in most rifles. In other words, the H-S Precision stock is a true "drop-in" type. Jim said the bedding block actually stiffens the receiver area of the rifle. H-S claims the barreled action can be removed from the stock and then replaced with little or no impact change.

Another nice aspect is that H-S stocks are completely finished with a textured, durable, baked-on polyurethane, so there is no need to paint them. In fact, when Jim and I had talked about stocks, I told him to paint it yellow. He sort of blinked and then reminded me that H-S stocks are already finished, and that they come in different colors.

During the phone conversation with the folks at H-S, I hesitantly asked what colors were available. I'm not certain how many were named, but when the lady said, "yellow with black marks," I blurted out, "That's exactly what I want." And this target type thumbhole stock is yellow with black specks that give it a sturdy look.

By the time the stock arrived Jim had rechambered the .223 barrel and headspaced it to the action. As H-S Precision claimed, the barreled action fit perfectly in the stock. For his first range test, Jim mounted a 6-24x Bausch & Lomb scope with the fine target crosswire.

The .22 BR Remington case made its debut in the late 1970s as a factory wildcat. Based on a shortened .308 case with a small primer pocket, the .22 BR is a little bit longer than the .22 PPC, which is based on the .220 Russian. This means that the case carries the standard .473 case head (same as .22-250, .270 Winchester, .30-06, etc), making it suitable for use in a standard bolt face. The .22 PPC has a .445 diameter case head and will not work in a

standard bolt face.

As I mentioned, making cases from Remington BR (.308) brass is a time consuming affair and requires some expensive swaging dies, but they can be easily made from factory 6mmBR brass. I used RCBS .22 BR dies. It's really a matter of necking down the 6mm case neck to accept a .224 bullet. The formed case must be shortened to 1.520 and the outside neck turned to fit the chamber neck. This may vary from chamber to chamber, but I turned mine to an outside neck diameter of .250 inch. I used an RCBS hand operated outside neck turner to remove high spots and make case neck wall thickness the same all the way around. Although there are several power case trimmers that push the cutter along the neck, it's wiser to use some type of hand tool for turning the outside neck. The danger when using a power cutter is cutting into the shoulder, which weakens the case. I'm not saying a power outside neck turner can't be used, but both K&M's handheld neck turner and RCBS's bench mounted outside neck turner are easy to use and are probably faster than a power set up. The neck wall thickness is somewhat of a personal matter, but I cut the .22 BR brass to a wall thickness of .012 (twelve thousandths of an inch).

It might be wise to throw in a word of caution at this point. Wildcatting cartridges, especially ones that might have been fired several times in their original chambering, puts a lot of stress on the brass. It's imperative to watch for incipient case rupturing — the beginning stages of cracking. Look for weak spots or areas that show case stretching. Don't try to save brass. When a case shows any type of weakness or cracking, throw it out.

While waiting for the stock, I made a batch of .22 BR cases using the RCBS .22 BR die set. The RCBS die set includes a shell head extension (trim die) for the first swaging operation. The case comes up through the die, and the neck can be filed flush with the top of the die. That step eliminates using a case cutter, but I normally shorten a neck an extra .010. This allows an extra shot or two before the neck needs to be trimmed again.

Jim used a moderate load of H-322 powder behind a 53-grain Sierra Match bullet for fire-forming and accuracy tests. This load was not chronographed, but a comparable charge of H-322 behind a 50-grain Sierra bullet produced a velocity of 3,362 fps. Because a 55-grain bullet might be a wise choice for the .22 BR Remington, I intend to test a *Nosler #4 Reloading Guide* load using Varget powder that is supposed to exit the muzzle at 3,544 fps. Nosler says that W748 was the most accurate powder tested. A max load of W748 behind a 52-grain bullet leaves the muzzle around the 3,675 fps mark.

Jim's first accuracy test was a 3-shot 100-yard group that measured .388, slightly more than 3/8-inch. Not knowing for sure if it was great shooting or simply good luck, he fired two more shots that didn't increase the group size. With 10 cartridges left and a thunderstorm threatening, he fired the remaining cartridges at the same target. The last 10 landed in the area with the first five. Several shots did stray, but the 15-shot group printed slightly under a half inch. For a varmint rifle, that is really laying them in. Fifteen shots at 100 yards in a dime-size hole is not only fantastic shooting, but also proof this .22 BR Remington wildcat is pretty close to being the ultimate varmint rig.

In the near future I'll do some more shooting to obtain the average chamber pressure of each 5-shot group. At the same time, the Acoustic Target will be used with the M043 PBL to determine ballistic coefficients, 100-yard velocities and average true muzzle velocities. I don't expect any major revelations, but simply knowing the ballistic side of a rifle/load combination is a major step on the road to field success. Coming right down to brass tacks, that's where Ole Yellow is supposed to turn in a top job. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Hunters in Missouri took 14,651 turkeys during the 2-week fall firearms season last year — 602 fewer than in 1998. Macon County was tops with 484. There were two non-fatal hunting incidents.

There were 24,868 deer-vehicle collisions reported in Ohio in 1998 — up from the 24,151 in 1997. However, state officials said the number of deer-vehicle incidents per 1,000 registered vehicles increased only slightly, from 2.16 in 1997 to 2.18 in 1998.

Free-flying California condors now number 49, which is quite an accomplishment considering there were only 27 — all in captivity — 10 years ago. With wingspans of up to 9½ feet and weighing up to 25 pounds, the huge birds are capable of soaring at speeds of 55 miles per hour at altitudes of 15,000 feet.

Seventy-seven percent of Americans either moderately or strongly approve of legal hunting, while 22 percent disapprove; 81 percent agree that hunting should continue to be legal; 62 percent agree that a lot of hunters violate hunting laws or practice unsafe behavior while hunting; and 40 percent of the general population feel hunting is an unsafe recreational activity.

The U.S. Senate recently voted 64-36 to defeat an anti-trapping amendment that would have banned trapping on 93 million acres of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Ontario hunters, fed up with big money influences and political pressures that cost the province its spring bear season, have announced the formation of the Canadian Outdoor Heritage Alliance, a coalition of sportsmen and outdoor organizations seeking to reinstate the popular hunting season.

Missouri hunters bagged 80,500 snow geese during the 1998-99 season, almost twice the previous state record. In the entire Mississippi Flyway, hunters took 394,200 snow geese — up 53 percent from the previous record flyway harvest. Hunters in the Central Flyway killed 295,800, bringing the mid-continent harvest to 690,000. These figures don't include snow geese killed during the late-season conservation order intended to lower snow goose numbers.

The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies says that program funding for wildlife not hunted or fished totaled $134.9 million nationwide in 1998. Although this funding has doubled since 1992, it still falls far short of the $1 billion that biologists estimate is needed to protect and conserve the 2,000 species (90 percent of our nation's fish and wildlife) that are not pursued by sportsmen.

Answers: 1, CF; 2, CF; 3, C; 4, C; 5, C; 6, CF; 7, CF; 8, C; 9, R; 10, G; 11, R; 12, R; 13, R.

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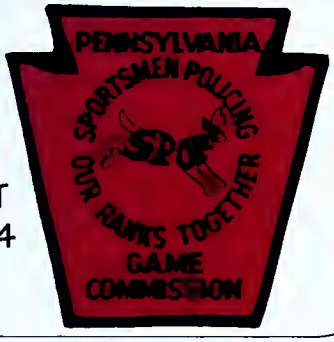




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Volume 71 ● No. 7
JULY 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial

Exciting Changes

THIS MONTH MARKS the beginning of the first hunting/trapping seasons of the new millennium. Perhaps the first thing you'll notice when buying your licenses is the new Hunting and Trapping Digest. It's full-size, includes color, and has advertising, too. This new format allows us to present more information in an easier to understand manner, and the advertising reduced printing costs substantially.

The new digest is but a small change hunters and trappers will find this year. The 2000-01 seasons and bag limits offer many new and expanded opportunities, particularly for deer hunting. The early muzzleloader season for antlerless deer, October 21-24, will give blackpowder enthusiasts a chance to hunt deer at a great time of the year to be afield. This new season will also indicate how receptive hunters are to hunting antlerless deer prior to the rut, a move the Game Commission may consider in the near future.

Last year junior hunters were allowed to take antlerless deer on the two Saturdays of buck season. This year — with antlerless deer licenses, of course — Junior and Senior License holders, and those with a Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) will be allowed to take antlerless deer *at any time* during the two-week buck season. Finally, what's sure to appeal to many hunters of all ages, is that this year's antlerless deer season opens on a Saturday, December 9, giving just about every hunter a chance to go "doe" hunting without having to miss school or take off from work. See page 40 for this year's antlerless license allocations and complete application instructions.

Complementing these expanded antlerless deer hunting seasons is the opportunity to purchase a second antlerless deer license, in counties throughout the state where they're still available. Called a "Private Land Antlerless License," this second license may be used to hunt on private land and on public land with an approved deer management plan. (At press time no public lands had met this criteria. DCNR and perhaps the US Forest Service are considering requests for some portions of the State Forest and Allegheny National Forest systems.)

For furtakers, this year, for the first time in 30 years, a bobcat season has been scheduled. Thanks to the complete protection the Game Commission afforded them in 1970, bobcats have rebounded and spread across much of the state. For this limited, closely regulated harvest, the commission has allocated 290 permits, valid only in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3 — the northcentral and northeast parts of the state.

The Game Commission stopped the trapping and hunting of bobcats in 1970, because it seemed the animals were becoming rare and susceptible to being over harvested. Today, though, with 15 years of research on the animal's life history, habitat needs and population dynamics, the commission is able to provide hunters and trappers an opportunity to harvest this elusive furbearer, while still allowing bobcat populations to grow. Although the opportunities are limited and harvests strictly controlled, the bobcat season marks yet another milestone in Pennsylvania's rich wildlife conservation history. See the new hunting & trapping digest for further details and permit application procedures.

This year is bringing many exciting hunting and trapping changes. Get your license and start making plans to take full advantage of what's being offered. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

People looking for old *Game News* magazines may check eBay.com. I suspect that anyone looking for old issues could just monitor the site for a month or two and pick up what they need. It's probably wise to shorten "Pennsylvania" to "Pa," when launching the search.

S. Bashline,
Spruce Creek

Editor:

As a NWTF member and a Hunter-Trapper Education instructor, I don't think you should have published the photograph in your May issue of the hunter carrying a turkey over his shoulder. I realize this was a posed photograph, but it gives the impression that this is how he carried his gobbler out of the woods.

M. McBeth,
Shippensburg

Editor:

I was pleased to find the tribute to WCO Dave Beinhauer in the May issue. My husband and I are members of the same church Dave was, and when we walked into the church on the day of Dave's funeral, we were thrilled to see so many of his fellow workers there. And from the words spoken by them, we soon realized how respected he was.

B. Hedglin,
Clintonville

Editor:

While on a camping trip to the Allegheny National Forest, I was astounded by the variety of wildlife I observed in just one day, including two deer, a porcupine and a bobcat within 30 yards of one another.

For all those who might complain about a lack of wildlife, I suggest they get out of their vehicles and open their eyes.

M. Williams,
Edinboro

Editor:

At 69 years of age, my time is short, but if there's to be a future in hunting, everyone who wants to keep a gun should join the NRA.

T. Wilson,
Nescopeck

Editor:

Linda Steiner's "Little Rituals" in the May issue brought tears to my eyes, reflecting back on 60 years' hunting in Pike County and thinking of the friends who have passed away. I still go back to the cabin to enjoy myself with some of my old hunting buddies.

G. Kalinowski,
El Paso, TX

Editor:

Sunday, May 21, I was sitting along Penns Creek where it empties into the Susquehanna, when a bald eagle came by, made several passes, and then swooped down and plucked a nice bass from the water.

From there it flew to a perch and enjoyed its meal. As a nature lover, I was thrilled to witness such a sight, and would like to thank the Game Commission for making it possible.

J. Rutkowski,
Selinsgrove

Editor:

Came home today with 101 things to do. Checked the mailbox and *Game News* was there. Two hours later, *Game News* completely read and still 101 things to do. Best little magazine ever printed. Keep up the good work.

C. Bowser,
Mechanicsville, MD

Editor:

I disagree with Don Lewis on the .410 not being suitable for beginners. My three sons and I shot our first squirrels with one. And, in 1998, it brought down a turkey at 35 yards with No. 6 shot. For safety, it can't be beat as a starter.

D. Yost,
Hatboro

Editor;

I'm renewing my subscription even though I disagree with the Game Commission's deer management program. I'm willing to give Dr. Alt a chance. I think you need to get a better idea of the deer population on public lands. I think it's lower than you may think.

H. Martin, Jr.
Troy

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



Songs of the Little Gray Bear

By Joe Parry

TIME TRAVELS in but one direction, past each of us and, sadly, in the opposite direction. So we, as hunters, must take every moment available, seize it, and while knowing we must indeed let it fly on toward those gone forever yesterdays, squeeze from it the juices of joy until it finally has to speed away, albeit dry to the very core.

There's something almost addictive about a breeze rustling the leaves of the gray birch, the smell on the wind that defies description, and the silent "call" that seems to always come from yonder mountain to the porches of a hunter's ears. His wife hears it not, but with undiluted certainty she knows her man has. He acts funny; he paces in front of the den window, looking out at make believe herds and coveys. And her sterile abode takes on the celestial smell of her man's magic potion — Hoppe's No. 9.

She watches his eyes as they, almost overnight, take on the appearance of a man watching the Rocketts chorus line from the front row. His cheeks become the color of over-ripened peaches, and even without his top denture in, he's able to whistle Beethoven's 5th without missing a beat. He shows not the smallest wince when, during one of his gun cleaning sessions, she beckons him to the basement to examine an 18-year-old washer that has decided to retire. And with each and every cuss word after bumping his head — all of which were rated for general audiences, for a change, — he'd simply rub his graying head and whisper from deep inside the washing machine, "I'm fine, Dear."

Hunting season was yet a week away, time enough for the tender cranial bumps to heal, and to get a part in for the washer from Yagottabee, Alabama. And there seemed to be plenty of room to replace it way back there in that deep, dark spot that was a full arm's reach from the more convenient front of the machine. "Don't worry, Dear. Shucks, I can get two fingers back into that spot where the part has to go. It'll be done in no time." She couldn't believe his subdued resignation during this time that he would normally refer to as a preposterous catastrophe.

"Popeye," she said, (She called him Popeye because that's how his puffed cheeks made him look when he didn't wear his upper denture) "How long were you sniffing that gun solvent this afternoon?"

When the washer part finally arrived, it seemed awfully small in proportion to all the noise and trouble it was causing, and the nuts, bolts, washers, O-rings, lock washers, bushings and mounting screws weighed more than the part itself. Undaunted and steadfast as the Titanic prior to clipping the iceberg, he smiled at his wife as he swung open the door to the basement and said, "Worry not my Queen Bee, thy laundering shall be lily white by morning and hanging to dry in the glory of a splendid autumn sun. Then, I, the master of wildlife lore, will head to 'The Valley of the Little Bears' and scout for my first day of making fools

of the little gray hickory gatherers."

The valley he spoke of seemed forever abundant with mast and alive with squirrels. There he always took a limit of one of his favorite wild cuisines: southern fried squirrel. It was there, too, he learned of the pungent taste of the bitternut hickory, and got an understanding as to why the grays shunned them — or so he thought — for they always seemed untouched. This hickory, sometimes referred to as the swamp hickory, always produced a tremendous crop of thinner shelled hickory-type nuts, and he wondered why it grew on this sidehill, and wondered, too, why the squirrels didn't take advantage of the annual bumper crop. Then one day he cracked one open and tasted it. His mouth puckered so that he would have made Louis Armstrong look normal when blowing the trumpet. "Whew," he said aloud, "these things could permanently deform a guy's cheeks and lips."

The man knew wildlife. He knew wilderness and he knew this hollow full of gray squirrels like the back of his aging hand. It was the atrium of his most favored asylum, his personal hideaway, his "church" without parishioners. There had always been an overwhelming sense of peace when he entered into its hallowed boundaries, and nearly every species of Pennsylvania wildlife had crossed his path under the canopies of The Valley of the Little Bears. He learned there, submissive to the lessons of everything wild, that the grays ate corn, but only the germ at the very base of each kernel, and he discovered that not only do ruffed grouse enjoy the gray berries of the dogwoods, so too, do the grays.

He learned of the utter silence of a great horned owl in flight, and upon examining a flight feather he'd found one morning, noticed that the very ends of it were made of the finest silken-like hairs, so the air would pass through without making a sound. Too, he learned of the ravages of mange, relatively common among both red and gray foxes. It bothered him to imagine the suffering they must endure with this skin disease. Today, he would walk the valley and see what the upcoming season might bring. He loved, as much as hunting whitetails, stalking grays in autumn, using a .22 rimfire topped with an old Weaver K-4 scope.

The hollow flows upward on one side while the other side drifts slowly downward, blending with an immense stand of birches and immature oaks. Considerably damp year-round, which may account for the many bitternut hickories in the hollow, spring seeps are everywhere as he steps into the comfortable familiarity of his ethereal fragment of heaven on earth. The dampness is what draws the ruffs I so love, he thought.

He makes it to a slight bench on the sidehill, overlooking a cluster of shagbark hickories heavy with mast. He builds a small fire of pine cones and oaken tinder then adds enough small, fallen hickory branches to get a small cooking fire going. A rock next to the glowing coals is warm and ready for the small teapot he carried along in his daypack. An oatmeal cookie his wife packed will go well with the lemon-laced tea. Then he will relax and listen for the sedating songs of the little gray bears. The early evening sun appears like a prairie fire on the sleep-inducing horizon. The hunter is sleepy, at peace with himself and the world, and in short order his eyelids weigh heavy and finally close out the falling sun.

In his slumberous state he thinks of how full he felt just being there in his special hollow, how not yet hearing any grays was irrelevant, because he knew it was but a matter of time and patience, and how any adversity was God's way of truly testing character and inner strength.

Rustling leaves brought his eyes to half-staff, one more open than the other. With

one eye tightly closed and the other open wide, he scoured the area before him, especially several nearby large hickory trees. Counting one, two, three — whoa, look at that big old male in the crotch of that tree — four. The count continued until he reached 19. After a while he decided to move, down to an old cabin site, sit for a bit, get another head count and go home. All in all, from just two positions, he saw 31 grays. Enough for two men, he thought, but he doubted anyone else would be hunting, including his son, Justin. He brushed off his woolen pants and headed for home, relaxed, tired and of a full heart.



At home during supper he told his son of the squirrels he'd seen. "Thirty-one grays today, Partner. Imagine 31 within a hundred yards of my first stand. Why those little gray bears were singing up a storm, so many at one time a guy would've sworn they were harmonizing. You gonna go with me opening day?"

"Don't know, Pop. I may just hold out for your first grouse hunt."

"Come on, did you see those targets I shot with that new ammo I bought?"

"You mean those cheap things you picked up at Tim's? I can never understand why you always go for the bargain, Pop. Why, those things are about half the price of a premium cartridge, and they can't be nearly as accurate."

The old man went to his office, took three shot-up targets from his cabinet and returned. "Lookee here, Mr. Skeptical," as he held out a target shot by a so-called premium cartridge.

"What's that? Geez, that group's all but disgraceful. How far did you shoot that thing, 100 yards?"

"Don't be funny. I shot it at 25, and for your information it's the target I shot with premium cartridges. Here, take a look at this baby." He held out a target with a single hole punched through it not much larger than a dime.

"Now that's a good group! How far, Pop?"

"I did this one at 25 yards," he held out a second target, "and this one at 50 yards. Both targets were shot with the cheap ammo."

"I'm impressed, Pop. That's sure more than good enough for squirrels."

"So, ya gonna hunt with me opening day?"

"We'll see. If I do, I'll likely take my Colt Peacemaker .22."

"You won't be adding many to the southern fried squirrel dinner with that."

"I might just go to prove to you I can hit 'em, Pop."

Plans were made. The father and son team would hunt the hollow of the little grays on opening day.

Long before daylight on opening morning the old man was up and rummaging around. Stuffing things into his pockets he'd likely never need. His son teased him relentlessly. "Yessirree, Pop,

you're sure gonna need that huge knife out there this morning. Never know when a water buffalo might attack. And those high boots? Geez, ya gonna do a little trout fishing later on?"

"Don't be funny. It's wet in that hollow, and for your information, it's difficult to cut off a squirrel leg with a smaller knife. You know darn well I like to skin 'em out and get 'em ready for cooking before I leave the woods."

"And look at your pockets for cryin' out loud. What's in them?"

"Those, dear offspring of mine, are my cartridges. One pocket has 38-grainers, and the other 32-grain ammo. I was torn between the two, so I'll just mix 'em up in my clip."

"How about the face make-up, Pop? You look like the commanding officer of a jungle commando squad. And the pants? Good grief, there are enough pockets in those things to make a compulsive shoplifter excited."

"Never mind the pockets. I take a lot of survival stuff with me. You never know when you'll get turned around in the woods and this stuff will come in handy."

"Severely turned around, Pop? We're gonna be 200 yards from the doggoned house."

The old man waves off his son's disregard for precautionary measures and says as he walks away, "I may just walk a little farther up the mountain."

Under the remnant of a full moon the two leave for the woodlot across the road. His son whispering, "Geez, Pop, you look like the Pillsbury Doughboy with all that stuff in your pockets. Shoot, you may sink into that soft ground up there in the hollow. Then what? If you're up to your eyebrows in mud you won't be able to get at anything in your pockets."

"Yeah, right. And if there's some sort of problem, you'll be the first to come cryin' for help."

"I'll probably be crying for a long time then, because by the time you get to me, rigor mortis will have set in."

"Never mind big shot with a handgun. Tell ya what. I'll bet you a steak on the grill I get more grays than you do. You win, I buy and cook. I win, vice versa, okay?"

"Fine with me, Pop. Last of my worries right now, though. I'm just wondering how in the world I'm gonna drag you out of the woods with all that junk in your pockets."

The two shook hands and separated just after entering the hollow. His son decided to hunt an adjacent hollow just over the mountain. As he left his father, he looked back, shook his head and, smiling ear to ear, waved goodbye.



Daylight filtered in with shafts of misty sunlight spearing down through the forest canopy. A gray fox bounced through as though it was riding four pogo sticks. The old man whistled softly, and the fox stopped. From one of the multitude of pockets, he took out his camera and carefully raised it to shoot a photo. The fox, looking in the other direction, turned just at that second and the old man got off two photos. Soon after, the

other grays awoke, gradually beginning their songs. Chattering came from every direction, and the old man began to spot grays in the trees. He didn't like shooting them from limbs, because a miss would allow the long-ranging bullet to fly to parts unknown. He waited for them to feed on the ground.

He wanted six grays and knew almost certainly that the hollow would provide them. And after hunting for only an hour he had four, all head shots. Then a wind kicked up and the songs in the hollow ceased. He waited another 45 minutes, but the squirrels had apparently called it a morning. Four was the good beginnings of a southern fried supper, so he decided to head home. His son was to meet him back at the house by noon. No doubt I whipped the hotshot with the revolver, he thought. Confident, he got up from his seat against a large tree, brushed off his pants and headed home. Down at an old spring he took tobacco from his pocket, and after digging a small hole in the earth, he gently placed the tobacco in it. Take from Mother Earth, give a little back. Smiling, content and tired, he left the woods.

His son was already home and in the bathroom sprucing up. The old man went to the basement and saw hanging on a wire line, six plump, skinned squirrels. He placed his four on the wire, and as he was taking off his "survival pants" he heard his son yell to him.

"Porterhouse, Pop. Medium rare."

"How do you know you beat me, Hotshot?"

"Pop, don't I always beat you? Shoot, I had the best teacher a guy could ask for."

Little did the young man know that by beating his father he had made the old man's joyous day fuller and more memorable. Medium rare it was. □

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A look at the number of game-farm pheasants harvested by hunters . . .

How Many in the Bag?

Duane R. Diefenbach
Assistant Unit Leader
PA Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit

THE GAME COMMISSION has been releasing pheasants in Pennsylvania since the turn of the century, and raising pheasants on game farms since 1929. With the decline of wild pheasants beginning in the 1970s, the PGC tried to compensate by increasing the number of farm-reared pheasants. Raising pheasants, however, is expensive. Since the mid-1980s the PGC has been annually releasing about 200,000 "hardy" pheasants, birds reared at lower densities in large, outside pens. Figure 1 presents the trends in pheasant releases, harvests and hunter participation from 1929 to 1998.

Despite decades of raising and releasing pheasants in the United States, one question has remained unanswered: How many of these stocked birds end up in the hunter's bag? In fact, nowhere in the United States has a stocking program been studied on a statewide basis.

That is just what the PGC set out to do during the 1998-99 hunting season. To accomplish this we banded more than 6,000 birds with aluminum leg bands that requested hunters call a toll-free number to report their harvest. These banded birds were released in every county, on public and private land, and throughout the hunting season.

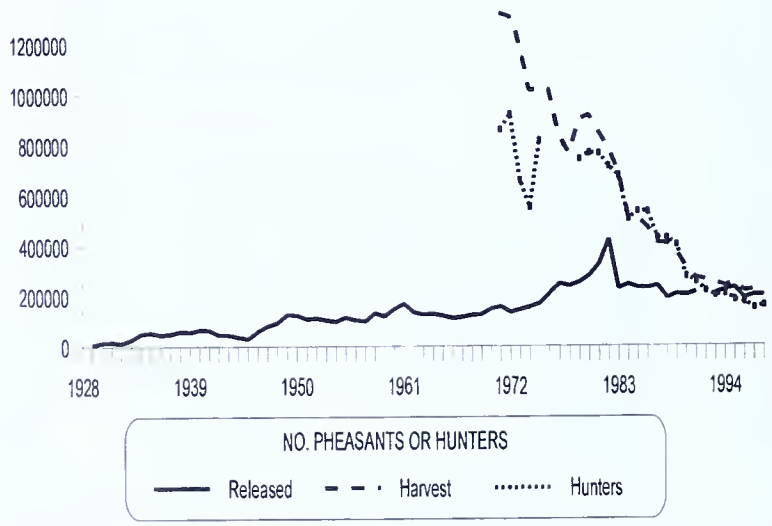


Figure 1. The number of pheasants released from Pennsylvania Game Commission pheasant farms, and the number of pheasant hunters and pheasants harvested from 1929-1998.

One problem with this technique is that not all hunters cooperate, even if the call is toll-free. For example, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study using banded mallards found that only about a third of banded birds shot by hunters were reported.

If we don't know what the reporting rate

is (the percentage of harvested birds that are reported), then we have no way of knowing the percentage of banded birds that are harvested. For example, if we released 1,000 banded birds, and received 400 reports, we might be tempted to estimate the harvest rate as 40 percent. If only two of every three harvested birds were reported, however, then 600 pheasants were actually killed by hunters, and the true harvest rate was 60 percent. If we don't account for the reporting rate by hunters, we can seriously underestimate the harvest.

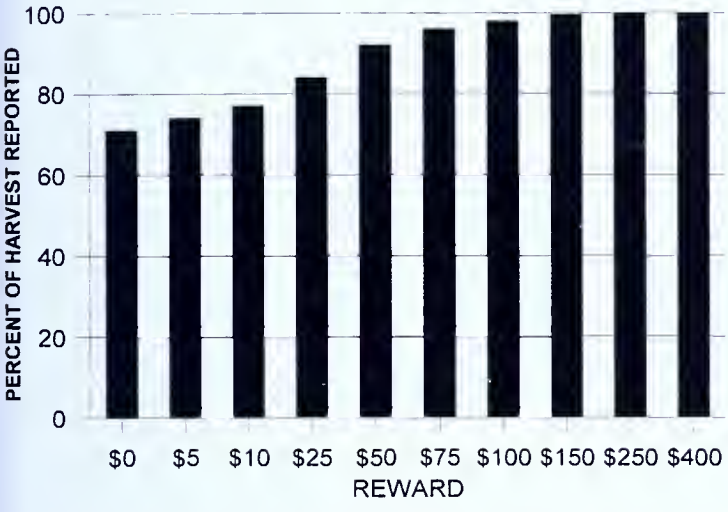


Figure 2. The percentage of banded pheasants reported as being harvested according to reward amount. At least a $100 reward was required for 100 percent reporting during the 1998-99 hunting season.

In our study, to understand what percentage of hunters would report their harvest, a little more than 2,000 of the 6,000 banded pheasants were also banded with reward bands. Reward values ranged from $5 to $400. The reason for the large range was that we didn't know how much money it would take before everyone would report their band. Believe it or not, the USFWS found in 1988 that it took a $100 reward before every hunter reported their harvest of a banded mallard. In 1998 dollars, that is equivalent to $144.

So, what did we discover? First, as expected, not everybody reported their harvest of a banded bird. It turned out that for birds with regular leg bands (no reward), about 71 percent were reported. This is much higher than we expected, and it says a lot about Pennsylvania hunters. Second, it took at least a $100 reward before all the bands were reported (Figure 2). Clearly, the use of reward bands was critical to obtaining an accurate estimate of the harvest rate.

And what about the harvest rate of game-farm pheasants? Well, it depends on when and where birds are released. The highest harvest rates occur during the regular season, on public land. We found that 65 percent of cocks released on public land were harvested, and 48 percent on private land. For hens, harvest rates were lower; 52 percent on public land and only 31 percent on private land.

Harvest rates of hens released in September were only 15 percent, and pheasants released in the late season had harvest rates of 34 percent on public land and 22 percent on private land.

Overall, we found that 51 percent of pheasants released immediately prior to and during the regular and late hunting seasons were harvested. In fiscal year 1998-99 it cost $14 per pheasant to release 199,613 birds in the fall. With a harvest of slightly more than half the pheasants released for hunting, the average cost is $28 per pheas-

ant in the hunter's bag. With the wide variation in harvest rates, however, the cost per pheasant in the game bag also varies widely, depending on when and where birds are released (Figure 3).

Now that we know how many game-farm pheasants are harvested by hunters, we can change when and where we release birds, so more birds end up on the dinner table.

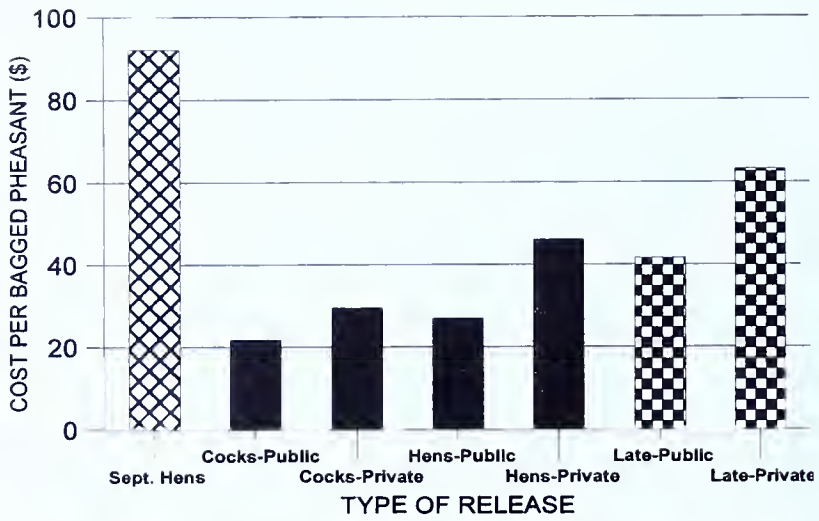


Figure 3. Cost of each pheasant harvested by hunters during the 1998-99 hunting season depending on time of release (September, regular season, late season), sex of bird, and location (public or private land). Cost was calculated as the number of birds released times the cost to raise each bird ($14.09) divided by the number of birds harvested by hunters.

The most important change that could be implemented is to expand the area where hens can be legally harvested, as was done for the 2000-01 seasons. Each year the Game Commission has released nearly 30,000 hens in the cocks-only South Zone, at a cost of nearly $400,000. These birds provide dog training opportunities, but none are harvested and few, if any, survive to reproduce. By expanding the size of the area where hens can be taken, we can provide more pheasants for hunters to pursue.

Other changes could also be made to better use our game-farm pheasants. For example, we could release more pheasants on public lands, because harvest rates are higher on these areas. Also, we could provide hunters with more specific information on when and where pheasants are released. Another thing we could do is reduce or eliminate pheasant stocking in the late season.

We do not necessarily recommend any of these changes at this time, however, because we need to know more about what hunters would prefer.

Many changes to the pheasant program would affect how and where sportsmen hunt these birds. Consequently, the Game Commission would want to conduct a survey to find out their preferences.

For example, even though late season releases have some of the lowest harvest rates, hunters may not want to give up this season. Also, providing more information about when and where pheasants are released could result in a lower quality hunting experience. These are the kind of issues that must be explored before major changes are implemented.

For the upcoming pheasant seasons you can expect more hen pheasants in front of the gun. Because of this banding study we now know that the expansion of the either-sex zone will result in better use of game-farm pheasants. In fact, the total cost of this study will be recouped within a couple of hunting seasons with more pheasants on the dinner table. Not bad for answers to some questions about pheasants that have eluded natural resource agencies for nearly 100 years. □

Bowhunter Education

By Keith Snyder
PGC Hunter-Trapper Education Division Chief

HUNTER EDUCATION in Pennsylvania has enjoyed a long and successful history that parallels similar efforts throughout the nation. Beginning as a voluntary 4-hour program in 1959, the course has evolved into its present format of a 10-hour mandatory course for all first-time hunters regardless of age. To date, 1,725,918 students have graduated from the program.

During this evolutionary process, the course has added substantial subject matter beyond the original focus on firearm safety. Today's hunter education program provides training in hunter responsibility, wildlife management, firearms and ammunition, wildlife identification, care of harvested game, survival and first aid, water safety, and specialty hunting areas.

One of these specialty areas is bowhunting. In Pennsylvania, the bowhunting component of the course provides 30 to 40 minutes of awareness level instruction about general concepts of archery, plus the bow and arrow's application to hunting.

Beginning January 1, 2000, the Game Commission began offering a training course specifically about bowhunting. The course is offered on a voluntary basis, for hunters interested in learning more about bowhunting and improving their skills, and for those who need certification to bowhunt in another state or province where this training is mandated. Bowhunting education is contributing to increased satisfaction and hunting success of program graduates across the nation.

Setting up this course, the Game Commission adopted the National Bowhunter Education Foundation (NBEF) course. It is conducted over two or more days and is 10 to 12 hours. It's to include at least five hours of classroom study and at least three hours of field experience. The course includes lessons on:

- History and Heritage of Bowhunting
- Responsibilities of Bowhunters
- Hunt Preparations — including game laws, equipment and clothing
- Big Game Anatomy and Effective Shot Placement
- Hunting Methods and Techniques
- Survival and First Aid
- Care, Use and Shooting of Bowhunting Equipment
- Treestand Use and Safety
- Scouting
- Recovery and Field Care of Harvested Game

This is a certification course that requires students to attend the entire program and achieve a passing score on a written exam to successfully complete the training. This certificate is not required to purchase an archery license in Pennsylvania, and the bowhunter education course does not replace basic Hunter-Trapper Education training.

A $12 fee is required, to offset costs and support the bowhunter education program. For a schedule of classes, visit the agency's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.



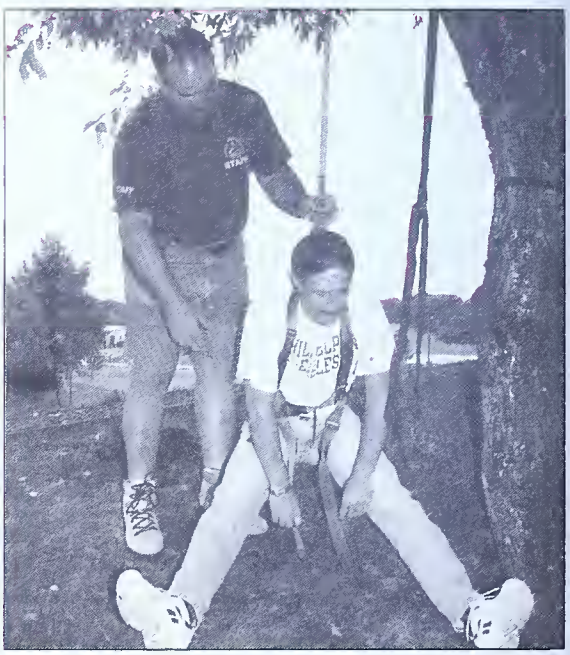
ACTUAL SHOOTING and shot placement exercises are part of the Bowhunter Education Program. Enrollment is limited to 30 students per class. Register early to ensure your spot in an upcoming class.



SIMULATED blood-trailing exercises are part of the field work participants receive. Learning how to scout for game sign is also part of the training.



THE BOWHUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAM, among other things, includes lessons on the care, use and shooting of equipment.



THE BOWHUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAM is a certification course that requires students to achieve a passing score on a written exam. Classes are conducted at 50 designated course locations across the state. Archery and sportsmen's clubs are typical course sites. Trained and certified volunteers — under the guidance of the Game Commission — teach the classes. For a schedule of classes, check the Game Commission's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.



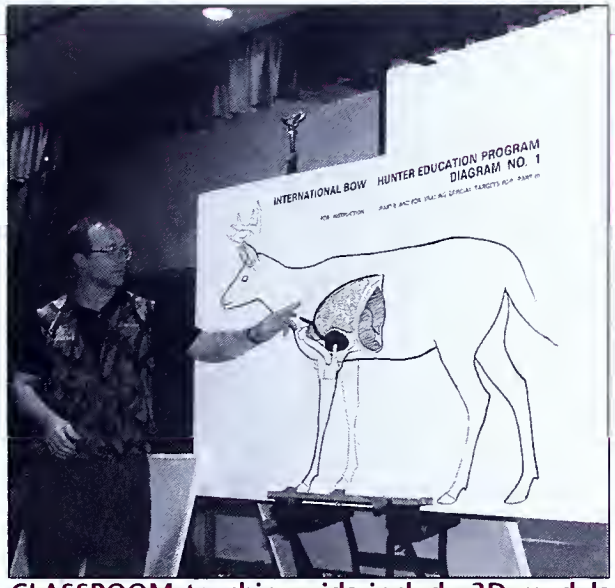




BOWHUNTER CLASSES are open to everyone interested in learning more about bowhunting. In many cases classes are comprised of adult students with some previous hunting experience. Youngsters and novices, however, are encouraged to attend. Students must be at least 11 years of age to enroll in a course, and parents are encouraged to attend the class with their children.



THE COURSE promotes safe, responsible, knowledgeable bowhunters. Part of the training includes hands-on treestand and safety exercises.



CLASSROOM teaching aids include 3D models and anatomy flip charts to reinforce shot placement concepts. Teaching methods include lecture and videos, demonstrations, group discussions, dilemma exercises and role playing skits.

BOWHUNTER EDUCATION sponsors recognized at the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania's (UBP) convention in Lancaster in February. From L-R: John Plowman, PGC Special Projects Manager; Jeff Miller, *Bowhunter* magazine; Ed Eckman & Jeff Frey, Bowhunters Warehouse; Pam Hamilton, *Bowhunter* magazine; Rob Kaufhold, Lancaster Archery Supply; Rich Kinsey, Kinsey Archery Supply; Ned Connelly, UBP Director; Bill Fehon, UBP President; Mike Lamade, UBP Executive Director; Brooke Hershiser, National Bowhunter Education Foundation representative; and Jeff Waring, *Bowhunter* magazine.

John Buck



Both Sides Now

George H. Block III

IT WAS a strange deer season. Temperatures hovered in the high 60s, and it hadn't rained for a month. While most hunters were probably praying for snow, Eileen and I basked in the sunshine as we lay in the field watching and waiting. We were sitting in a small clump of cornstalks, something to break up our outline.

In front of us the field stretched 400 yards to a fairly large woods, and to our left it dropped down for about 300 yards to a long narrow strip of that same woods. At the lower left side of the stand where the cover started, the woods shot up a steep hillside.

Arriving on our stand about 3 p.m., we knew the deer weren't likely to be moving until about 4:30, so we just sat back and relaxed. There were a couple of spots where deer usually entered the field, and they, of course, attracted most of our attention.

After about a half hour I spotted movement in the far woods to our left. Automatically I dropped to the prone position and looked through the scope. "Doe," I muttered to Eileen, but then I caught movement farther down in the woods and swung to look at it. The deer blended into the background, but after years of finding deer in the scope, I had no trouble spotting the deer and the rack on its head. I never hesitate when I see antlers. The crosshairs settled a little high on the chest and I squeezed the trigger.

Later, my laser rangefinder confirmed the shot as one of 350 yards. As I stood over the buck and looked back at Eileen waiting on the stand, I knew I had just made one heck of a shot. But something was unusual with this particular shot. I wasn't carrying my usual pre-64 Model 70 in .270, but rather the same model rifle chambered for the .264 Magnum.

Most hunters have a favorite deer rifle, one they're confident with and can shoot well. I'm no different. For more years than I care to admit, my .270 has been my companion on most of my big game hunts. With it I have dropped deer almost at my feet and as far away as 400 yards. Being a rifle nut, I reload for and shoot a variety of models and calibers, yet it's this .270 that I tend to reach for when hunting is serious. Deer have fallen to my .25-06, .308 and various 6mms. If there has ever been a better cartridge than the .270, I have not been able to find it.

I'll never forget a big buck that my wife moved out of an old orchard. I was on stand and it was her turn to walk. The mini-drive worked to perfection, but the buck didn't come out where I expected. Instead, he stayed in the cover. As always happens, the .270 came to my shoulder smoothly and I killed the running buck at no more than 10 steps from where I stood.

Just a couple years ago I was sitting and watching a valley that stretched 400 yards in front of me. Covered with clumps of thick briers and an occasional locust tree, this particular spot is a favorite bedding and hiding area, particularly when the weather is foul. While the wind doesn't hit the gully itself, the hill overlooking it is right smack in the full force of the mildest of breezes. That day the wind was especially foul and mean. The ground was covered with a trace of snow and the wind gusted at about 30 miles per hour. With temperatures in the teens, do I need to tell you that I was freez-

ing? After about an hour, I was about to give up, but then a buck that had been bedded decided to switch briar clumps. Suddenly, the shivering quit, and I had to contemplate a 400-yard shot.

The wind hitting the left side of my face was a major worry; I knew such a gust could move a bullet quite a bit. With the .270 sighted-in at 300 yards, I held above the deer's spine and touched off a shot. The buck dropped and slid down the hill — all of that woodchuck hunting had paid off.

It was after this particular hunt that I realized that maybe I had been hunting with the wrong rifle. The .270 is still my favorite caliber for most hunting situations, but there may be a better outfit for certain situations. Some of these require rifles I wouldn't want to carry very far, but when I know I'm going to do nothing but sit, a heavier, flatter shooting rifle is often a good choice.

There's still a lot of farm country in the state, and more and more, this is where the deer are found. And even in the traditional deer counties up north, opportunities for shooting from one mountain to another are ideal for a flat shooting rifle. After more than 40 years of shooting deer and woodchucks, and reloading, I've developed some definite ideas on what is required. First of all, a white-tailed deer is not big. Most of the bucks in my neck of the woods here in southwestern Pennsylvania dress out between 125 to 180 pounds. I don't need a cartridge with tremendous knockdown power. What I do need is reliable bullet expansion and flat trajectory.

As I studied what would work best at long range, I placed a high priority on what was already in my gun cabinet. At first glance, five calibers stood out.

Another important factor was barrel length. Long ago I learned that if one wants high velocity, adding a couple inches to the barrel is better than adding more powder to the cartridge. Now, no hunter wants to carry a 26-inch barrel through a tangle of crabapple and rose thickets, but for a rifle to be used only while waiting on stand, that's not unreasonable. More than once my old Oehler 33 has demonstrated the futility of building a flat shooting outfit, and then handicapping it with a 22- or even a 24-inch barrel. A 7mm Magnum so barreled is little more than a .270. The five rifles I was considering had one thing in common, and that was enough barrel to enhance performance. Four of them had 26-inch barrels and the other a 24.

I mulled a long time over the .25-06 and found little to criticize. Pushing a 120-grain bullet at 3,000 fps at the muzzle, it's an interesting long range rifle, but actually not up to my many .270s that produce 3,100 fps with a 130-grain bullet, or the reliable 110-grain Sierra at 3,300 fps.

Incidentally, I have downed at least 30 whitetail bucks, some as large as 180 pounds field-dressed, with the 110-grain Sierra, and both my wife and son, Pat, have used the 110-grainer with good success.

Another intriguing rifle that was quickly eliminated was the .250 Ackley Improved. This little cartridge thinks it's a .25-06, pushing the 85-grain Nosler to 3,400 fps. If the .25-06 wouldn't do, this little dandy wouldn't either.

One of my favorite big game cartridges, and one I would use for elk and bigger game, is the .300 Winchester Magnum. I have loaded for both the .300 Winchester, and the .300 Weatherby Magnum extensively, and there is not much difference in performance. The Weatherby is better on paper than the Winchester, but not by as much as some believe. The particular rifle used with either is as important as the cartridge.

My .300 Winchester is a pre-64 Model 70 and shoots almost any bullet in a 2/3-inch group at 100 yards.

A favorite load is the 165-grain Hornady at 3,200 fps. I looked hard and long at this rifle as a long range deer outfit, but consider it a bit of overkill — if that is possible. One problem with the bigger cartridges is recoil. Shooting up to 2,000 centerfire rounds a year, I've learned that it's the small rounds I shoot more accurately.

Regardless of what caliber a hunter shoots, hitting the game in the right spot with a properly designed bullet is what's important.

In the corner of my gun room leans an interesting rifle. One that shoots as flat as any big game rifle I have ever owned. Not only that, but it will put three factory rounds into one ragged hole at 100 yards. Moving the 130-grain bullet at 3,400 fps, the .270 Weatherby Magnum is one flat shooting rifle. With a fiberglass stock, it's the perfect long range rifle, but with one minor glitch: I just don't like the Weatherby action as well as the old Model 70. Winchester's 3-position safety is the best I have ever seen on a rifle, and its trigger design, while old, is as close to perfect as one can find. I guess I am just prejudiced toward the Winchester.



EXTREME long range shots call for something like the Winchester Model 70 in .264 Magnum, left. The Remington Model 7, right, in 7mm-08 makes a handy brush rifle, while the .270, center, in a standard weight rifle is a good compromise.

Well, right next to the .270 Weatherby is a pre-64 Model 70 in .264 Magnum. This rifle is also accurate and fast. While it doesn't group quite as well as my .270, it still shoots three shots close to a half inch at 100 yards, and maintains its grouping at long range better than any rifle I have ever seen. For long range deer hunting, after much experimenting, two bullets for use in the .264 stood out. The 120-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip and the 129-grain Hornady. Both are ignited with the Federal 215 magnum primer. The Nosler moves over my skyscreens at 3,375 fps, and the 129-grain at 3,290. I settled on the Nosler and have never regretted it. With this load I have shot a few groundhogs at more than 400 yards. I also dropped an antelope in Wyoming at long range, and made an even longer shot on a coyote that made the mistake of stopping to look back.

The rifle has also performed well in Pennsylvania, dropping deer out to 400 yards. I know the old .270 did that, but this rifle shoots flatter, giving me that bit of confidence that maybe someday I'll shoot one at the 500-yard mark. Sure, other cartridges such as the .257 Weatherby will perform as well, but the .264 is everything I look for in a long range rifle.

As my hair grows more gray, I've been thinking more about rifles on the other side of the .270. While the .264 serves me well when I'm on stand for a long period of time, what about when I'm still-hunting? This question really hit home one day when I was bear hunting in the mountains of northern Pennsylvania.

When John Dino of Canonsburg parked the Bronco along the Clarion River and I

looked up to where he wanted to go, I couldn't believe it. Now, John is 38 years old and doesn't think too much about steep mountainsides. Ever since I topped the 50 mark, I prefer more gentle areas.

That day I was carrying a standard Model 70 with a 3.5-10x Leupold, and when I got home I gave a lot of thought to what would make a nice, light rifle. Another consideration for using such an outfit is the days that I spent hunting with my grandsons. Hunting with them usually finds me moving through the woodlots, trying to chase deer their way. Again, I wanted to use something in the gun cabinet — it's just cheaper that way. Looking at the rifles I owned, I realized my overall dislike of ultra-light rifles didn't leave me much of a choice. The only really light rifle I owned was a Model 7 Remington in .243. Now I have never seen a deer go far when hit with a proper bullet from a .243, but my search for a light rifle was complicated by the fact I just might want it to double as a bear rifle.

Considering that a bear can weigh more than twice as much as a deer, and wears a pretty heavy coat, the .243 is too light. Also, taking into account that a chance at a black bear is usually rare, there is no reason to be undergunned when the opportunity does arise. The .243 and 6mm are great little deer calibers, but I wanted a bit more for bears.

The Model 7 is a great shooter, although one thing I don't like about light rifles is that they just don't hold well. I have sent a few woodchucks to the great pasture field in the sky with the Model 7, and on a good day I can keep my favorite deer bullet inside 3/4 of an inch with it, which is satisfactory. As I've had good success with this rifle, I thought another Model 7 might be the answer.

I considered the .308, but I already had a Model 70 in .308. Another good option would be the defunct .358 Winchester, but because few rifles are chambered for this cartridge, I dropped it. The 7mm Mauser has a good reputation, but I thought a short action would be better for a walking rifle.

Restricted to a short action with adequate power limits cartridge selection to the 7mm-08, .308, .260 Remington and .350 Remington. Just like the .358 Winchester, the .350 Remington has become all but obsolete.

I also thought about the .284 Winchester, but again, no rifles are currently being chambered for it.

John's favorite walking rifle is a Remington classic in .350 Remington Magnum, restocked in fiberglass. Good rifle, but unnecessarily big and it does tend to kick.

A friend had a Model 7 in 7mm-08 that he wanted to sell, so that settled it. He had what I wanted and the price was right. Again, like the .243, this Remington is a good shooter. With the 139-grain Hornady, 140-grain Nosler Partition or the 130-grain Speer, this rifle keeps its shots well under the one-inch mark. Equipped with a 2-7x Leupold, it makes a wonderful companion when I don't want to be weighed down. Hardly a long range outfit, I would have no qualms at trying for deer or bear out to 250 yards, though, and I suspect that range will increase as I shoot the rifle more.

As it stands now, it seems I'm set for most hunting situations found in Pennsylvania. When ranges are long and I don't plan on moving, I'll reach for the .264. When I know I'm going to do a lot of walking or climbing, I'll go with the 7mm-08. When I'm flexible and may move or sit, I still have my old friend, the .270.

Nonetheless, before I depart the hunting fields, I hope I can think of another firearm situation for which I'll need to find another rifle. The process of researching then assembling a rifle/cartridge combination is one of the most interesting phases of this shooting and hunting game. □

You Washed My What?

By Jim Fitser

SOME GUYS have all the luck. Their wives make them take their boots off on the back porch, carry their hunting coat to the basement and, if they were lucky enough to get any game, that goes into the garage until it has been thoroughly cleaned. You don't consider that luck? Consider the alternatives.

If you walk through the house with your boots on there will be muddy footprints on the carpet, and you'll have to clean the carpet. You lay your hunting coat down on the kitchen floor and blood leaks through onto the linoleum, you'll have to clean the floor. The wife allows you to clean game in the kitchen sink, and you end up with a mess of fur or feathers, not to mention small red splotches all over the sink, counter and wall from the splashing water mixed with the inevitable blood, so there's more cleaning.

Unless they were raised in a family of hunters, most women don't want anything to do with what comes home at the end of a day afield. In reality, the hunter/husbands of such women are lucky. Me? No. I got a wife who bent over backwards to be amenable to my outdoor pursuits. She wanted to show me



that she understood it's important for me to partake of my ancestral, innate drives. Man is by nature either a farmer or a hunter or both. I have enough trouble with a small garden, which leaves only the hunting for me to enjoy even minimal success with my inner urgings.

In the early years I thought my situation — a wife who could have survived in Colonial days — was a rare gift enjoyed by few of my peers. It didn't take long, however, for me to begin feeling guilty about the muddy boot prints on the carpet or the blood on the linoleum. She never said a word. She didn't have to say anything. She just got down on her knees and cleaned the floor, softly humming a little tune. I couldn't take it.



I started cleaning up my own messes. It took a while before I realized it was much easier leaving the boots on the back porch and dressing the game in the garage. She still insisted on providing some assistance, though, giving the game the final once over for hair or feathers, and then putting it into a pot of saltwater to soak overnight. Next morning, she'd rinse it off and package it for the freezer. What more could any man ask?

Any hunter worth his salt knows it takes several years of hard use to break in a good canvas hunting coat. The game bag has to be subjected to various bits of rabbit and squirrel hair, pheasant and grouse feathers, empty sandwich and candy wrappers, and moldy pieces of leftover dog treats. All this must be properly seasoned with the inevitable blood and gamy odors. The outside of the coat has to be properly broken in by briars and multiflora rose thorns, numerous days in driving rainstorms, and caked with various shades of mud.

There is nothing so dear to a hunter than a well-worn hunting coat, except perhaps a brace of broken-in beagles — which enjoy lying on the coat on the trip home after a hard day in the brush and swamps. A hunting coat becomes an old trusted friend, possibly equaled in value only by an old pair of boots or a hat. It takes years of shared joys, miseries and tribulations afield for such a relationship to develop. A sudden change in this relationship can be devastating. Bless the dear, understanding wife who works to maintain a blissful relationship with her hunter/husband. She could in no way imagine what a hunting coat means to a man. So it was that I was not at all prepared for her next bit of help.



One year on the night before the small game season opener, I was roaming about the house in my annual ritual of rounding up the necessities required to make the next morning a success. The old leather boots were pulled from the shelf in the garage, given a thorough brushing and a new coat of beeswax. I picked my traditional opening day hat from the hook on the back of the basement door. It still bore some faint remnants of the imprinted beagle patch on the front, and the blaze orange would be as good as new with a few swipes of a soapy cloth. These tasks accomplished, I made my way to "my room."

Somewhere in the depths of one of the closets in my den/office on one of the hooks holding everything from gun cases to archery armguards, and binocular cases to extra gun slings and holsters, was my beloved pair of Safe-T-Bak hunting pants with the nylon fronts. After several minutes of searching I found them, and it was a joyous reunion. Three years of busting brush and briars showed this would likely be their last season. As one who had been taught to give the hounds every bit of help in rousting game from the densest and thorniest cover, the nylon fronts were more than a bit frazzled and frizzy, with a few rips here and there.

Everything was just about ready, and the pile of bare necessities was growing in the middle of the floor where it would stay until the next morning, when I would either don or carry to the truck those items essential for opening day. Boots, socks, shirt, hat, shells, knife and the Remington Model 870 Wingmaster 12-gauge fitted with the improved cylinder barrel. Now for the last item: Where did I leave my hunting coat?

It wasn't in the closet; I'd just gone through that. A thorough search of the garage revealed I had not left it there after the last trip out during the late season in January. I figured it might be in the truck. Although I knew better, I thought perhaps I threw it back there alongside the sofa/bed, and it got covered by some of the other junk that finds its way into and out of the pickup during the year. I rooted around and found various items I had been looking for in the past, but not the beloved hunting coat. I began to feel a bit bewildered. Where could I have left it?

I called my father, thinking I may have stopped at his house on my way home from my last hunting foray and left it there. I knew I didn't have it on when I went into his house, though, and had been there visiting many times since. He would have returned it to me had I left it there, knowing of its almost spiritual value to me.

Dad assured me the coat was not at his place, and he chided me for my lifelong habit of misplacing things. As I finished the conversation with him, my dear wife happened to pass by and immediately sensed my mood of heightened consternation. While informing her of my plight, a smile as big as the crescent on the old outhouse door graced her face. Why she knew right where my hunting coat was. It was hanging on the back porch.

I knew I hadn't put it there. At least I thought I knew. Perhaps senility had set in at the ripe old age of 46. What came next was worse than being hit by the proverbial ton of bricks.

"I saw it hanging in the garage yesterday, and it looked pretty ratty, not to mention the rather malodorous green cloud emanating from it. I washed it for you so it would be nice and clean and fresh when you go hunting tomorrow," she blithely informed me as she went into the rec room carrying her evening cup of coffee and two graham crackers, trailed expectantly by my two beagles.

Away to the porch I flew like a flash, tore open the door and my heart felt a gash. Good grief, she did. She really did wash my hunting coat. My trembling hand lifted it from the wooden hanger. It was dry, extremely dry. And stiff. There were no stains, no mud and no traces of hair or feathers. No pleasant odor of several years worth of harvested game or of swamp water. I fought back the tears.

As I clutched my violated dear friend to my bosom and numbly stumbled back to my room, my feelings ran the gamut from near rage to hopeless despair. A sacred piece of me had been violated. I put it on but it felt foreign, like some strange cloak. No, more like a shroud. Good grief, the sleeves were three inches shorter. Even worse, it smelled like freshly laundered bath towels. How could she have done this to me? How could I have been so lucky to have a woman so caring and thoughtful?

Never again I vowed. Never again would I leave any of my precious hunting garments where she could find and wreak havoc upon them.

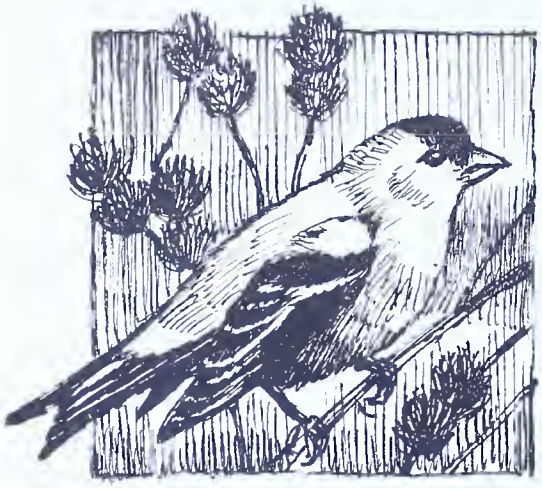
I spent the post hunting season months building a secret storage area behind a panel in one of my closets. Here would repose peacefully, and without fear, those precious friends with whom I share my most treasured outdoors moments, especially my beloved hunting coat. Yes, especially that most dear of friends. Now it would be safe until next hunting season.

Nevermore would I awake in the middle of the night, cold perspiration beaded on my forehead, screaming, "You washed my what?" □

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

HUNTER GREEN

by Bob Sopchick



A GOLDFINCH, near exhaustion, struggles to free itself from a large clump of burdock, but its wings are held fast by the hooked configuration of the burs. The captive bird quivers like a tragic yellow bloom on the weed stalk. From the lower part of the wild meadow a small woman picks up the movement and wades up through the tall weeds. For a few moments she examines the bird's plight, then carefully pries each feather from the burs. She studies the goldfinch closely while preening its rumpled feathers between her fingers, then releases it with an admonition to be more careful.

Madeline Green sits on a tumbled wall and produces a dog-eared field journal from a pocket of her canvas apron. She expertly sketches the finch and burdock stalks and notes the page with time and location. She writes, "For an instant I held the bird against my cheek, then watched it fly across the shimmering meadow — a spot of yellow sunlight condensed — into the green folds of summer." Satisfied, she follows the long lane that leads to her cottage overlooking a pair of braided creeks.

She sits on a porch swing, squeaking in time with rising insect choruses until the first stars become visible in the velvety dome. Another day in her beloved woods now done, she goes inside.

Pressed between the pages of her sketchbook is the lacy armature of a dried fox grape leaf. She sandwiches the fragile leaf between two small panes of glass, seals the edges with tape and fastens it within a grapevine frame. She holds it up to a light and smiles. All throughout the cottage, hanging from floor to ceiling on every wall, are hundreds of paintings and curiosities from her woods — the collected images from a lifetime of devoted observation and careful study. On one wall a gallery of insects, opposite that, animated paintings of birds and detailed sketches of their eggs and nests and many studies of feathers. Delicate fern prints and pressed leaves and wildflower paintings adorn a hallway.

The cozy kitchen brims with vivid renderings of mushrooms and turtles and mice, all notated and bearing Latin names. In an alcove hangs a group of photographs — the pictorial record of her years. A photo of her in cap and gown, taken on graduation day at the university on the other side of the mountain. A black and white photo of her first day teaching science at the high school, a color photo of her last day in the classroom 33 years later. A portrait of her good husband Henry, gone these many years now, and several of their daughter and grandchildren. She hangs the leaf among the photos, for in



it she recognizes some element of her aging self. Her favorite photo is a sepia snapshot of her and her father, both clad in plaid wool, kneeling in the snow on each side of a forkhorn buck, a deer taken on this very property. Printed in the margin, "Madeline's first deer — 1950."

So many obstacles back then, so many, she recalls. Especially for a black man with a daughter who loved to hunt. There were never any invitations for them to hunt in northern deer camps, and it was difficult to even gain permission to hunt on private land.

But her father was a determined and successful businessman and bought this land, 200 acres of their own, and built the lovely stone cottage in the woods where they spent glorious summers and hunted in fall. Those early tribulations helped with other challenges later on, of being a black woman in college, and the first black teacher at the rural high school.

There is another small room in the cottage that she never shows to visitors. It's her hunting room where 48 sets of antlers hang chronologically, from that first forkhorn to the 8-point buck she took last year, many of them taken with a bow. The dried fans of dozens of wild turkeys are filed in a box, all of them called in with her voice while never wearing a stitch of camouflage. A large bear rug is draped over a settee.

Widely recognized as an accomplished naturalist and artist, and beloved teacher, Madeline feared that many would think differently of her if they knew she hunted, so she kept this remarkable part of her life private.

Madeline's woodsmanship was astonishing, and even now, at 65, few could match her prowess in the field. Fewer yet could effectively stalk game as well. Her style was unique, helped somewhat by her small stature. She had the unwavering patience of a bobcat, moving imperceptibly, completely focused, using scraps of cover, able to remain motionless in awkward positions. Hunting was a natural and necessary extension of her curiosity, of her deep desire to know and possess that which she respected and loved.

After breakfast she clips two small pails to loops on her apron, packs her watercolor set, then follows the creeks to a blackberry patch. Madeline had spent several summers in England where she studied drawing and watercolor painting. Her instructors urged her to pursue this natural talent seriously, but for her it was simply a beautiful way to record what she saw, more insightful and personal than a camera.

At the berry patch she fills the pails with water, one for painting with, the other to clean brushes in as she works. Later, she would heap the pails with berries. A large garter snake slithers by her foot and she pinches a shred of dried skin near its tail that peels away as it continues on. She paints studies of the snake and the heavy purple berries, and of a catbird that scolds her. She winds her way through the island between the creeks, filling the berry pails, and spots the red form of a bedded deer ahead. She freezes instantly, eyes squinting, then inches forward for a better view. It is a deer she has never seen before, a buck with huge velvet-sheathed antlers. Flies walk on his dark muzzle and

scale the sweep of his bulbous antlers, and she notes how his ears continue to swivel even though he dozes. She watches him for a long time until he rises and stretches then walks to the creek to drink, thin white tail twitching.

Later, while the blackberry muffins bake, she sketches two portraits of the buck, one as he appeared today, another of how he might finish out after his antlers were done growing and the velvet sloughed off. He has 10 symmetrical points with a 20-inch spread, but she wonders at the mass, and is eager to see him again.

All through August she tries to pattern the buck's movements. Dusk and early mornings find her watching at the edges of fields, but she sees him only once at a distance in failing light. Although not a trophy hunter, she knows this is her chance at the buck of a lifetime and practices daily with her bow.

September is busy and exciting. Earlier in the year some friends at the university had shown her work to a prominent New York publisher who reviewed samples of her art and writing and enthusiastically offered to publish a large book of her work. Her editor, a personable woman named Paula, visits to review Madeline's progress. She is accompanied by a photography crew and an art editor who boxes up Madeline's field journals and selects art from the walls. Paula emphasizes that the book be one of substance, not just a collection of delightful images, and encourages Madeline to weave her philosophies and the compelling story of her life through the pictures and notes as a parallel theme.

Madeline works hard on the book throughout October, but harder yet on killing the buck. One Sunday afternoon she sees him up close, freshening a scrape. The buck's sleek coat is the rich hue of burnished acorns, and his thick neck supports massive antlers, the exact configuration as in her sketch. She knows that he is vulnerable now, during the rut, but in the golden days that follow, luck is not on her side. The buck is always running does, or is just out of range. He ignores her grunt calls and scent markers. She posts near his scrape lines and could have taken any of several other bucks, but he never shows.



Gun season arrives and Madeline is certain he will fall to another hunter, but after the first few days the pressure dies off and there is no word of anyone taking a big buck. For two weeks she still-hunts the densest cover with her carbine, and waits for him in the heart of the swamp. She doggedly tries tracking him down in fresh snow, even sees him running several times, but is never offered a clean shot.

After gun season Madeline realizes that she has fallen behind on her book, and she starts working nights. While the snow drifts deep in the lane the pages stack up, and when the new year is but an hour old she finishes. The next day she sits on the settee in her hunting room and reviews the manuscript. After reading it she paces from room to room. The academic

aspect of the book is solid, but her personal treatise seems to lack vitality, a certain spark, and seems to wash out at the end. She looks out the window into the gray woods, wondering if she is brave enough, skillful enough to include what will certainly change the perception of her and the scope of the book.

The buck beds down on a sidehill above the frozen and brittle swamp just as large flakes start to fall. He looks out over the creaking cattails while snow piles thick upon his back and gathers on the great spread of his antlers, but he is secure and rests peaceably, ears ever swiveling. The temperament of the storm shifts, and the snow gives way to sheets of noisy sleet. Near dusk the buck stands and shakes the snowy blanket from his back and tosses his head.

A muffled resonance sends the buck bolting downhill, and he stops and looks around, then heads for the safety of the cattail swamp. As he trots the air seems to congeal, and his pace slows, and the blurred landscape suddenly tilts vertically, but he continues to run, legs heavy as if swimming, sinking now into grainy darkness, until one hoof makes slow circles in the air as the vapor of his last breath rises and drifts.

Madeline comes up from behind the fallen buck, watches the pounding sleet dimple his dark unblinking eye. She removes the arrow from its rest and snaps it back into the quiver next to a blooded, yellow-fletched arrow.

A few days later she paints a perfect life-size rendition of the antlers. She paints every bur and bead and pitch-filled scratch, and in those cryptic markings reads the story of the final year of the buck's life, and the conclusion to her book.

Throughout the winter Madeline reworks the manuscript. She looks deep inside the hollows of her heart and hunts the thickets of her soul in the way she had hunted the buck, and the words flow. All her life she was proud of being a strong black woman, of having overcome adversity, and now with the liberation of her hunting spirit, she felt complete. The last obstacle to overcome, however, was the possibility that the marketing team would not accept this revelation. She sends the untitled manuscript off to New York, along with the painting of the antlers.

Months later Madeline receives a shipment of advance copies of her book. She excitedly removes one from its slipcase and sees that it is bound in handsome green cloth, and she runs her fingers over the gilded title, *Hunter Green: The Nature Art and Essays of Madeline Green.*

To her delight the last spread in the book is the painting of the buck's great rack, and printed in the space between the antlers is the enlarged and ghosted photo of her father and herself. Partially overlapping that image is the final passage from her journal, printed in her own precise hand:

I DREW THE ARROW AND ANCHORED THE FEATHERS TO MY CHEEK AND IN THE NEXT INSTANT SAW THE YELLOW VANES FLY THROUGH HIS HEART, LIKE A DEADLY YELLOW BIRD. AS THE BUCK RAN OFF INTO THE SILVERY VEILS OF THE STORM I THOUGHT OF THE CAPTIVE GOLDFINCH I HELD TO MY CHEEK AND RELEASED WITH THIS SAME HAND, AND KNEW IN THAT MOMENT THAT WITH THIS HAND THAT SET THOSE BIRDS FREE, I MUST NOW PEN THESE WORDS AND SET FREE THE HUNTER WITHIN.

A Look Back

By Bill Bower
Bradford County WCO

"WHERE IN THE WORLD did you have all this stuff stored?" my wife asked after seeing the exhibit of Game Commission memorabilia I had put together at the Farm Museum in Troy. The Farm Museum is made up of rooms displaying different themes, and at least one room has a new display every year. This year one of the rooms is dedicated to the history of the Game Commission.

History was my favorite subject in school, and after becoming a deputy game protector in 1966, I immediately became interested in the history of the Game Commission. In 1968 I attended the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, and from that point on I began studying the commission's history and collecting agency memorabilia.

The word history comes from the Greek word *histor*, meaning learned man. According to Marcus Tullius Cicero 106-43 B.C., history is the witness that testifies to the passing of time. It illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of antiquity.

Therefore, we should learn from history. A good orienteering person sets a bearing and takes off on a journey, but during the trip, he often stops to look back and take a back reading to make sure he is staying on course. It's the same with history. We need to keep looking back to make sure we repeat the successes of the past and avoid the failures. We can't go back and change the past. We can only learn from our mistakes and change the future.



JUST SOME of the Game Commission memorabilia displayed at the Farm Museum in Troy, Bradford County.

Some historians have thought that they were writing history "exactly as it really happened," but no historian can keep his own point of view from influencing what he writes. This is what led Napoleon to say, "History is only a myth agreed upon." And Henry Ford to say, "History is more or less bunk."

In 1907 the Game Commission set a course. A law was passed that allowed hunters to shoot only bucks. The commission convinced hunters that shooting females was bad conservation. Of course, this allowed the deer herd to multiply at an alarming rate, and by the 1920s the deer herd was causing tremendous damage to crops and the forest.

The Great Depression was profitable for the commission. The C.C.C. did a lot of free work on game lands, building and maintaining roads, building fire trails, etc. During that era the commission was able to push forward with an aggressive land ac-



GAME PROTECTOR legend Bob Latimer's sneak boat from the 1940s. The craft is just one of the interesting pieces of Game Commission history being displayed at the Farm Museum.

quisition program. In a 2-year period at the beginning of the '30s, the commission purchased 146,590 acres, more land than it had bought in the previous eight years. By the end of the decade, the commission's landholdings totaled 661,809 acres.

This came about because in 1927 hunters agreed to have their hunting license fee increased from $1 to $2, with 75 cents of this increase earmarked for land purchases and management programs. Looking back at this move today, nearly 28 percent of the commission's budget in 1999 came from the sale of timber on game lands.

During the Depression, the WPA printed a lot of posters for the Game Commission. These posters depicted the particular problems the commission was having at the time. The surviving posters have become part of Game Commission history. One poster has a picture of a hog eating wildlife. Above the hog in big bold letters are the words, "DON'T BE A GAME HOG." Another poster depicts young wildlife, with the warning, "LEAVE THEM IN THE WOODS." A collection of these posters is on display at the Farm Museum.

At one time waterfowl hunting was even more popular than it is today. A sneak boat, built in part and used by Bob Latimer is on display at the museum.

Bob was an early game protector and is a legend within the commission. Paddles Bob built for the sneak boat are also on display. When Bob gave the boat and paddles to Gene Case of Troy, a note was attached to one of the paddles. It reads:

"This is one of a pair of paddles I made from a white ash plank when I secured a sneak boat in 1949. To run a sneak boat smoothly when going to waterfowl in the decoys, or to handle a sneak boat safely when jump shooting on high fast water, good paddles are needed. These have served me well, they know the waters of the West Branch of the Susquehanna intimately from Lock Haven to Northumberland and that of the North Branch fairly well from Sayre to Black Walnut. My log of waterfowl shooting shows that from 1949 to 1986 inclusive, these paddles helped me bag 7 brant, 130 Canada geese and 2,863 ducks, or an even 3,000 waterfowl, which brings back some wonderful memories.

"With the scarcity of ducks now, shorter seasons, smaller bag limits, etc. I am retiring one of these paddles. Gene Case, of Troy, was in the front end of the sneak boat on the North Branch and he no doubt used one of them that day. As an old and valued friend, as well as a sportsman, I am thinking he might like this one for a keepsake. So, I am turning it over to him for safe keeping this October 25, 1988 with all good wishes. R.E. Latimer, Muncy, PA."

Bob Latimer has since passed on, but these paddles tell part of the waterfowl hunting history in Pennsylvania when at its peak.

Also on display are original uniform parts from the '30s, '40s and '50s, along with badges, traps, game law books and other outdoor related items. There's a

metal jacklighter's basket made from an old Civil War bayonet that fits on the end of a gun barrel. In days before spotlights and flashlights, a person who wanted to hunt at night (perhaps at a salt lick or along the water's edge) would fill the basket with pine knots, preferably jack pine knots because they burned bright and longer than any other kind of pine knot. This is how the term jacklighting came about, a term still used today to describe the act of illegally shooting game at night.



WATERFOWL hunting was big back in the 1940s. From left to right: George Dieffenderfer, O.M. Pinkerton, Bob Latimer and Rodman C. Case.

Many early *Game News* magazines are on display. Here again, the history of the commission and things occurring over the years are told on the pages of *Game News*. For instance, during WWII, one *Game News* cover depicts a lonely dog sitting in front of a double barrel shotgun and a hunting coat. On the wall hangs a picture of its master in an army uniform.

Game News began as a newsletter from Harrisburg to its field force. It was first published in mimeographed form in July of 1929, and by April 1932 it was printed and made available to the public.

Along with the hunting items on display is the Farm Museum's vast collection of farm related items. The Farm Museum is located on Route 14 just North of Troy at the Troy Fair Grounds. The museum is open every Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., Sunday from 12 noon until 4 p.m., and Monday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Large groups such as schools and senior citizens can make special arrangements by contacting the museum at 570-297-3410. □

Cover Painting by Ned Smith

THIS MONTH'S cover, *Looking For Trouble,* by the legendary Ned Smith, is the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art's fifth time-limited edition fine art print. *Looking For Trouble* has never been published. Edition size is limited to the number of orders received by August 31, 2000. Prints measure 15x22½ inches and will be on 100% rag, acid-free paper, with an embossed seal of the Ned Smith Center. A limited edition 4-inch embroidered patch complements the print; patches are $5 with $1.50 shipping for up to five. Prints are $150 each ($125 for members), plus $12 shipping; framed prints are $245 ($220 for members), plus $17 shipping. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make checks payable to and order from: Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, P.O. Box 33, Millersburg, PA 17061. All proceeds will benefit the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art.

As many long-time readers know, Ned had a long association with *Game News,* as staff artist, acting editor, and then contributing artist. His "Gone for the Day" column, which appeared in *Game News,* was published in book form in 1971 and has become an acknowledged classic of Pennsylvania nature writing. Ned also created Pennsylvania's first state duck stamp and the first three paintings for our popular Working Together for Wildife program.

FIELD NOTES

Never Learn

FULTON — Roadhunting is unlawful, unethical and extremely dangerous. Last year three people in this area shot themselves while hunting from a vehicle. Unbelievably, one individual shot himself on two different occasions, with the last incident nearly costing him his life.

— WCO STEPHEN LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

It's Working

With the help of organizations such as Pheasants Forever, Schuylkill River Keepers, Berks County Conservancy, Berks County Conservation District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California University we were able to complete nearly 35,000 feet of streambank fencing projects in a little more than a year. These projects will stop soil erosion, provide clean water and critical nesting habitat for grassland nesting birds, and cover for rabbits.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

Two-Time Loser

WYOMING — Deputy Gene Gaydos was rummaging through trash that had been dumped on state game lands here, hoping to find some clue as to who had illegally dumped the rubbish, when he discovered an official city notice addressed to the perpetrator ordering him to remove the accumulation of garbage from his backyard.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Struttin' Their Stuff

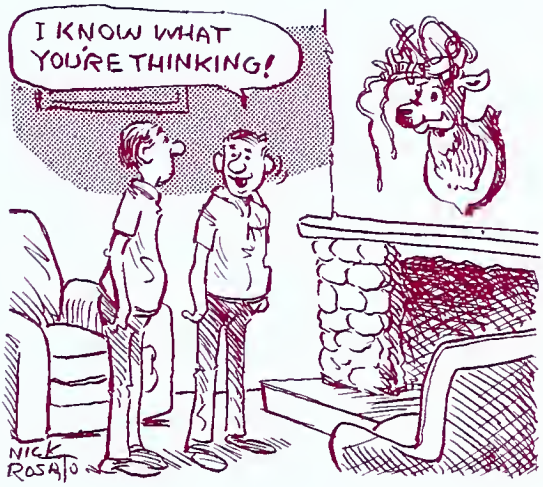
CUMBERLAND — Food & Cover Corp foreman Gerald Magee was driving through SGL 169 when he noticed a ringneck pheasant along the edge of a field. Just beyond the pheasant he saw a mature gobbler strutting.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

Suspended

LYCOMING — WCO Terry Wills and I were doing a bear processing demonstration at a school, but after we finished we couldn't get the 500-pound bruin back in the culvert trap to haul it away. Terry came up with an idea to tilt the trap on end so that the back was touching the ground so we could then roll the bear into it. It looked like the plan might work until Terry, hanging onto the front of the culvert trap, was see-sawed into the air when the bear was rolled onto the back end. Terry looked like a rag doll blowing in the wind. Sorry, Terry, we'll stuff rocks in your pocket next time.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, WILLIAMSPORT



That's the Rumor

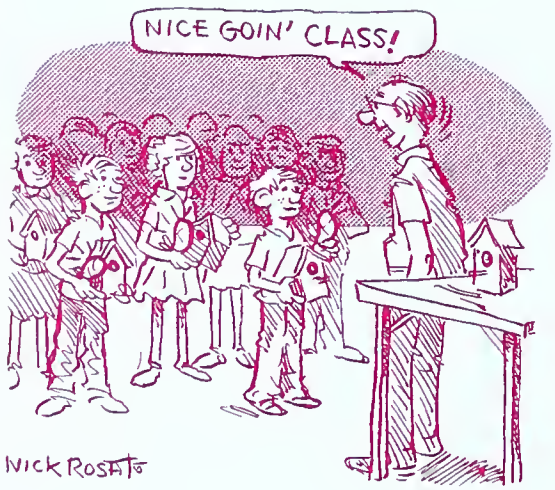
Cris Keister of Penns Creek bagged a nice buck on opening day last year, but his buddies wonder if he had the buck tied to a tree before the season. It so happens that when he approached his downed buck he noticed a heavy cord wrapped around both antlers, also with a piece of broken antler from another buck tangled up in it. He got a taxidermy mount made just the way he found the buck.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

That'll Teach Ya

WARREN — I thought I was prepared when I arrived at the Tidioute School to present a bluebird program for Miss Turner's 2nd grade class. I arrived with hammers, screwdrivers, a cordless drill and enough bluebird kits for each student. The kids worked hard and did an excellent job of constructing the houses, but after the first hammer blow I thought of two additional items I need to add to my kit: ear plugs and Excedrin.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE



Injury Report

CUMBERLAND — I supplied bluebird box kits to a 5th grade class at Green Ridge Elementary School, and not long after, I received thank you notes from the kids. The students also reported that four out of 27 class members pounded their thumbs while nailing the boxes together.

— WCO TIM GRENOBLE, CARLISLE

Encouraging

Greene County maintenance supervisor Dave Griffin reported a pheasant nest with 13 eggs in one of our warm season grass fields. With good reproduction reported last year in the county, maybe pheasants are making a comeback in this end of the state.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Admire from Afar

ERIE — On April 19 the bald eagles near Union City hatched their first eaglet. This is the third year the eagles have attempted to nest, and it's the first successful nest in Erie County. The birds are impressive to watch, and it's exciting to see them caring for their young. As you can guess, this has brought a lot of visitors to the area. I would like to remind visitors to enjoy watching the birds but to not approach too close and disturb them.

— WCO DARIN L. CLARK, ELGIN

Whole Lot of . . .

BRADFORD — Deputy Charles Fox and I have been working together for more than 30 years and are forever correcting each other. It's a big deal whenever we can prove the other wrong, so one day after responding to nuisance calls about beavers and bears, and bobcat sightings, I told Charlie that I needed his bobcat tags back. "Bobcat tags, you mean beaver tags don't you?" he asked. Not wanting to admit a mistake I said, "Yes, but because we've just spent the day answering calls about animals with names beginning with 'B', I was testing to see if you were paying attention." To which Charlie quickly responded, "Yes, and so does bull."

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Glad To Have You Back

NORTHUMBERLAND — After graduating from the training school I was assigned to Monroe County, and I didn't have many Field Notes published until WCO Randy Shoup was assigned the other half of Monroe. As my neighboring officer, Randy was always doing something that made a good Field Note. After transferring to Northumberland, I again failed to have many Field Notes published. All is not lost, however, because Randy recently transferred to northern Northumberland County. I'm sure I'll have plenty to write about now.

— WCO DIRK B. REMENSNYDER, SUNBURY

Wild Goose Chase

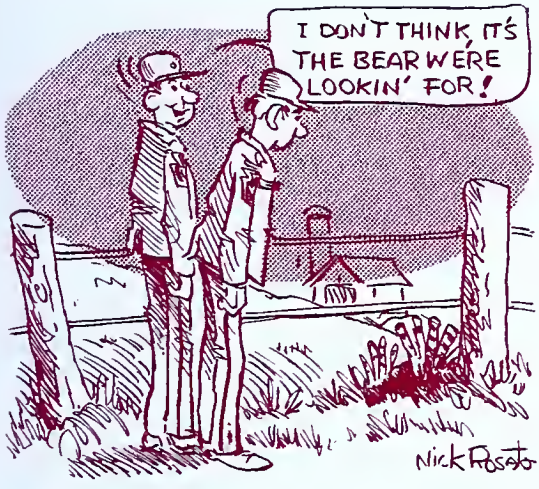
YORK — I chased an injured goose 200 yards down a road, falling flat on my face after diving for it, when it ducked into a thicket. Half an hour later I emerged minus my tie with briars embedded in nearly every part of my body. I decided the goose wasn't that injured after all.

— WCO RODNEY MEE, EAST BERLIN

Wrong Type

MONTGOMERY — I received a call about a bear that was sighted in front of the Perkiomen Valley High School. When Deputy Ed Glover and I arrived, prepared to tranquilize the bear, we met a state trooper who said he was in front of the school when the call came in, and he had not seen a bear. It turned out that the trooper was the "bear." It seems he was running radar, and when someone heard on their CB that there was a "bear" in front of the school they called us.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



A Long Stretch

MONROE — Neighboring WCO Mark Rutkowski excitedly called me on the radio to inform me that he had found the roadkilled bear we had been looking for. I guess if you stretch the imagination a bit, a wild turkey does look something like a black bear.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE



Don't Count on It

ALLEGHENY — I recently assisted in the filming of a documentary on urban deer management, but my claim to fame in the film is picking up roadkilled deer. I wonder if Hollywood would consider that for an Academy Award.

— WCO DANIEL T. SITLER, OAKMONT

500-Pound Test Line

POTTER — Deputy Bob Miller was working in his yard one day last April when a group of fishermen stopped their car in his driveway and asked where he had stocked the trout. Bob said he hadn't stocked any fish, but one fellow insisted that he had and pointed to the culvert pipe on wheels parked in the driveway. It seems this guy followed Bob home after he had just relocated a bear. Bob grinned and said that the only "fish" he had released that morning weighed about 275 pounds.

— WCO ELWOOD L. CAMP, ULYSSES

Provided Their Lumber

Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Chuck Seward and I recently inspected one of our impoundments on SGL 57 and were surprised at how high the water level was in the impoundment. We immediately checked the emergency spillway and noticed that beavers in the impoundment had dismantled our tree shelters and used the stakes to erect a dam across the spillway.

— LMO EUGENE R. WEINER, JR., CAMBRA

New One

INDIANA — WCO Patrick Snickles was conducting a program on waterfowl identification at a Project Wild Teacher Workshop when he classified ducks as either divers or floaters. After a while the snickers began. Floaters? How about puddle ducks, Pat?

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Intimidated

BERKS — I had a mounted bear at our display at an outdoor show when a man with his black Lab stopped by. As soon as the dog noticed the bear he sat down, locked up his front legs and wouldn't budge. The last time I saw the dog he was being dragged out of the building.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Keepin' Busy

Being assigned to the region office I wasn't sure what to expect, but so far I've assisted other WCOs with school programs, served search warrants, investigated violations in several districts, and trapped bears and nuisance turkeys.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, SE REGION OFFICE

Adaptable

BEDFORD — The robin isn't the only early bird to get the worm. During heavy rains last spring I noticed a broad-winged hawk and a raven feed on large nightcrawlers that were forced to the surface.

— WCO TIM FLANIGAN, BEDFORD

Could Have Been Worse

MONROE — I was called to the home of a woman who had a sick skunk in her residence. I asked the women how the skunk got into her house, and she said she found it stumbling outside and it appeared sick, so she carried it inside to warm it up. Warm up it did! It rolled around on her new living room carpet and sprayed all over. The skunk also tested positive for rabies.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER



"Mr. Mom"

POTTER — A landowner told me about a pen-raised gobbler he had that sat on a clutch of eggs last spring. I've heard of hens that gobbled but this is a new one.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Three Alarmer?

WASHINGTON — I got a call about a turkey that had flown through a bedroom window at a residence. When I arrived the woman said the fire company had been there and removed the bird. The next day the firemen, in full gear, appeared in the newspaper holding the turkey before they released it. Thanks to the fire company for responding.

— DEPUTY BETH FIFE, VENETIA

Dual Usage

YORK — Waterways Conservation Officer Lee Cryer, his trainee and I were combining my winter deer and turkey mortality survey with some preseason trout patrol last March. After commenting that he hadn't seen any turkeys in the area, Cryer's trainee excitedly pointed down along the creek and said that there were two turkeys. After Lee and I pointed out the differences between turkeys and muscovy ducks, the trainee said, "I guess this will be a Field Note." As he didn't say who for, I assumed he meant *Game News* and not the *Angler & Boater.*

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

A Real Ham

PIKE — HTE instructor Dick Petsch noticed a bear approach his yard and eye up his pot-bellied pig, seemingly intending to make it a meal. When the bear got too close, however, piggy turned and chased it out of the yard. Maybe I should recruit pigs to help with the many nuisance bear calls I get here.

— WCO ROBERT W. JOHNSON, MILFORD

Bright Idea

GREENE — English sparrows are considered a nuisance, competing with our native songbirds, but you have to admire their ability to adapt. I saw one eating dead insects stuck to the bumpers of cars stopped at a traffic light.

— WCO RODNEY L. BURNS, WAYNESBURG



Just Havin' Fun

POTTER — I checked a group of four turkey hunters last spring in the Hammersley Wild Area when one man said the only turkeys he had seen were his three partners. When a second man mentioned he hadn't even heard a gobbler, the rest of the group quickly said that was because his hearing aid wasn't on. They then told me that they called this man "Pappy," because, at 79, he was the oldest of the group. Pappy then commented that he had to keep a watchful eye on the youngest of the bunch who was 75.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, RENOVO

Extended Family

LUZERNE — WCO Tom Swiech and I were investigating a call about a bear with five cubs hanging around a house when we spotted two cubs up a tree near the residence. We thought the caller had miscounted, and didn't think anymore about it as we placed the cubs in a crate. We took the cubs into the woods and were about to tree them, because we knew the female was still in the area but then noticed momma bear with her three other cubs in a ravine. We released the two we had in the crate, and they ran down to join their family. The sow gave her cubs a quick bath, and then all six bears continued on their way.

— WCO MATTHEW M. GREBECK, SHICKSHINNY

A Bit "Behind"

SCHUYLKILL — HTE instructor Gene DeCindio is frequently teased about the time he shot the tail off a deer. I joined the same club when I tranquilized a treed bear in downtown Pottsville. The dart had no effect on the bear, and after watching it munch on leaves for 15 minutes, I shot it again. This one worked and my deputies quickly pointed out that my first dart was sticking in the bear's tail. Deputies Yanosky and Rinaldo don't believe that I aimed there.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Couldn't Resist

While attending a speaking engagement at the Catawissa Avenue United Methodist Church in Sunbury, WCO Remensnyder and I decided to lighten things up a bit by quizzing the group. The attendees were each given a number so we could randomly draw our "contestants." One gentleman caught us by surprise when he didn't know the answer to my question and said he would like to use a "life line." We obliged and he chose a friend who knew the correct answer. WCO Remensnyder asked the two if that was their final answer.

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION, DALLAS

Game Commission begins public outreach on elk hunt

THE GAME Commission's Elk Hunt Advisory Committee has begun the first phase of seeking public comment on the group's recommendations on how an elk hunt should be reestablished in Pennsylvania.

"The Game Commission has discussed how to institute a limited elk hunt to manage the growing herd in northcentral Pennsylvania," said Rawley Cogan, PGC elk biologist and chairman of the Elk Hunt Advisory Committee. "The initial report we submitted to Executive Director Vern Ross and the Game Commissioners provides several options on how the hunt could be structured. Now we are going to seek public comment on the plan as we work to shape the final proposal."

Created last September, the Elk Hunt Advisory Committee includes representatives of the Game Commission, the General Assembly, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the agricultural and tourism industries, corporate and conservation partners in the elk program, and sportsmen.

"If the elk herd continues to grow at its current rate, the population could be nearly 1,300 by 2005," Cogan said. "If we do not prepare for an elk hunt, we should expect to face more conflicts with landowners, more vehicle collisions and potential habitat destruction and competition between elk and other wildlife. As with other wildlife species, such as deer and bear, we need to move forward with a limited hunting opportunity to ensure the long-term success of our elk herd."

In the first phase of public outreach, the committee has provided copies of the report for comment to representatives of various groups that have a direct interest in an elk hunt. The report also is being provided to local citizens opposed to the elk program and several animal rights groups. The elk hunt proposal has also been posted on the Game Commission's webpage (www.pgc.state.pa.us). As changes are made, based on public input, the report will be revised.

"This will be an open process," Cogan said. "We are planning to hold open houses throughout the state. We expect to hear differing opinions about the direction we should take, but we need to open the channels of communication between the Game Commission and the public on this important issue."

In related news, state House Game and Fisheries Committee Chairman Bruce Smith introduced legislation to create an elk hunting license.

"Under my bill, the Game Commission could establish a limited number of licenses as a tool to ensure sound management of Pennsylvania's wild elk population," Rep. Smith said. As drafted, Smith's bill would allow hunters to pay a non-refundable $10 fee to apply for an elk hunting license that would cost $25 for residents and $250 for nonresidents. The Game Commis-

sion plans to hold a lottery for the limited number of licenses that would be offered each year.

This year's elk survey indicates the herd is approaching 600 animals — an unprecedented benchmark. As recently as 1992, the herd numbered 183.

More precisely, based on three days of aerial survey work over the Allegheny Mountains in Cameron, Elk, Clinton, Clearfield, Potter and Tioga counties, the elk population is estimated to be 566 animals, up from 480 in 1999 — an increase of nearly 15 percent.

The herd breakdown, by sex and age in this year's survey (with last year's numbers in parenthesis) is: 99 (71) branch-antlered bulls; 52 (33) spike bulls; 288 (255) cows; and 120 (92) calves. Thick vegetation prevented an accurate determination of the sex and age of 7 (29) elk.

Known elk mortality over the past year totaled 47, up from 27 recorded last year. A breakdown of losses, with last year's figures in parentheses, is: highway collisions, 11 (4); accidental, 1 (2); brainworm infestation, 2 (2); shot for crop damage, 12 (3); and illegal, 6 (5). Other causes included animals struck by trains, 8 (3); natural cause, including malnutrition, 1 (1), and unknown, 6 (7). Elk mortality has been averaging between six and eight percent for the past few years.

"In earlier decades, brainworm had been a limiting factor on the growth of the elk herd," Cogan said. "Over the past two years, only four brainworm infestations claimed elk."

The elk inhabiting Pennsylvania today are descendents of 50 released in Clinton and Clearfield counties in 1913. From 1913 to 1926, 177 elk — mostly from Yellowstone National Park — were released in seven counties to serve as a breeding base for what was hoped would develop into a population that could sustain hunting.

Eastern elk were found throughout Pennsylvania prior to its colonization. Their numbers declined as civilization advanced, mostly as a result of unregulated hunting and deforestation. Elk were scarce in most areas by the beginning of the 1800s. They have been protected in the commonwealth since 1931.

Third-phase of elk trap-and-transfer completed

WITH ASSISTANCE of DCNR's bureaus of Forestry and State Parks, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Game Commission recently completed its 3-year trap-and-transfer program to move a total of 70 elk from Elk to western Clinton County.

"One of the things we've learned since the program began is that the elk generally are not moving far from the release sites because of the good habitat in these areas," said Rawley Cogan. "Also, at the current densities, there is little to no competition between elk and deer for the available food, because elk are primarily grazing animals and deer are primarily browsers."

In response to concerns raised by some residents, the Game Commission scaled back the third phase of the project. Original plans called for the movement of up to 40 elk this past winter. However, in an effort to avoid conflicts with certain residents, the goal for this phase was reduced to between 15 and 20 elk.

As it turned out, 18 were trapped and moved from agricultural areas in

St. Marys, Elk County, and released on SGL 321, formerly the New Garden or Kelly Estate, in western Clinton County.

Initiated in 1997, the trap-and-transfer program focused on returning elk to portions of their former range. Beginning in 1998, cows, calves and some spike bulls were taken in a corral trap; antlered bulls were anesthetized and moved individually. The program has expanded the elk range to roughly 835 square miles.

This program is a proactive management approach to limiting elk conflicts and the potential for habitat deterioration, as well as increasing biodiversity. Expanding the elk range also is an important goal of the state's elk management plan, adopted by the Game Commission in 1996.

"The traditional elk range was comprised of one-third publicly owned land and two-thirds privately owned land," Cogan said. "The expanded range encompasses an area that is just the opposite: two-thirds public land and one-third private. We expect that we will see fewer conflicts with humans if the elk are on public land."

The trap-and-transfer project was funded by and in cooperation with the DCNR, Pennsylvania State University, Frostburg State University, Purdue University, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.



LMO JIM DENIKER, left, is this year's recipient of the Shikar-Safari "Wildlife Officer of the Year" award. Shown here with Northwest Region Land Management Supervisor Keith Harbaugh, Jim has been a land managment officer in the Northwest Region since 1981. Among his accomplishments are the establishment of the Brucker Great Blue Heron Sanctuary near Greenville, and pioneering work with the Sichuan pheasant in Mercer County, and his work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Wildlife Program."

High school students honored

JEREMY WEBER, 17, Mohnton, Lancaster County, took first place recently in the "Wildlife Conservation Record Book Contest," an annual statewide contest sponsored for the past 20 years by the Game Commission and the state Department of Education. The contest is designed to encourage high school students to take an active role in wildlife conservation.

The Garden Spot High School junior, who serves as the FFA's Grassland Chapter vice president, received a $125 cash prize for his efforts.

Weber's book detailed his efforts over the past three years to improve wildlife habitat on his parents' — Glenn and Lucy Weber — property and a neighbor's property. Weber's work included placing bluebird, waterfowl and squirrel nesting devices, making border cuts on forest edges, planting conifers and switchgrass, and improving existing wetlands.

"I always spend a lot of time in the outdoors," explained Weber. "I got into this because I enjoy watching wildlife, and I wanted to make the area around my home more attractive to wildlife. I'd probably have done the same stuff for wildlife even if there wasn't a contest.

"The thing I love the most is doing the projects," noted Weber. "But I also get a big kick out of seeing wildlife use the things I put out for them. One of my favorite things is checking nesting boxes to see what's using them. I've already had a screech owl use a squirrel box and squirrels use wood duck boxes. I also find plenty of white-footed mice in my bluebird boxes."

Bob Lauffer, Garden Spot High School agricultural teacher, said, "Jeremy Weber is an avid hunter and trapper who is really an all-around good student. He gives his all to everything he's involved in. He won the FFA junior public speaking state title as a freshman and the FFA conservation public speaking state title as a sophomore."

Weber is the fourth consecutive Garden Spot High School student to capture the top honors in the Wildlife Record Book Contest. He shares this string of top placements with Greg Yoder, Terre Hill, who won in 1996 and 1997; and Kendall Yoder, Terre Hill, 1998. Kendall Yoder, 18, took third place in the most recent competition and will receive a $75 cash prize. He followed Andrew McMullen, Morgantown, a senior at Twin Valley High School, who took second place and earned a $100 cash prize.

Participants in the wildlife record book contest are required to maintain a log documenting their wildlife projects. The record book must include a daily diary; a management plan for the area where the student will perform habitat improvements beneficial to wildlife; and photos of the project area. When the project is completed, the book is submitted as the student's entry in the contest.

"It's gratifying to see young persons such as Jeremy Weber performing projects beneficial to wildlife, especially in a highly developed county like Lancaster," said J. Carl Graybill, Jr., PGC Bureau of Information and Education director.

"He is making a difference for wildlife through his unselfish and dedicated actions. He's a fine role model for his peers and someone I'm sure his parents are proud of. We at the Game Commission are proud of him, too. His efforts exemplify that Pennsylvanians, both young and old, care deeply about wildlife."

WCO trainee applications being accepted

WITH THE graduation of the 25th class of trainees in March 2000, the Game Commission is planning to enroll the 26th class in March 2001.

Applications for the position of Game Conservation Officer Trainee will be accepted by the State Civil Service Commission until July 14, 2000. To obtain an application, contact the Civil Service Commission; the Pennsylvania Game Commission Personnel Office at 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797; or any Game Commission region office.

For more information, check the Game Commission website at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Antlerless license deadlines coming

COUNTY TREASURERS will begin accepting antlerless license applications, through the mail, from Pennsylvania residents on **Monday, August 7.**

Nonresidents may apply through the mail starting on **Monday, August 21.**

Where available, applications for Private Land antlerless licenses will be accepted on **Monday, August 28,** from residents and nonresidents.

Like last year, flintlock licenses must be purchased by **August 31.**

In Special Regulations Area counties, treasurers will begin accepting over-the-counter antlerless deer license applications on **Monday, August 28.** In all other counties, over-the-counter sales will begin on **Monday, November 6.**

See the 2000-2001 Hunting and Trapping Digest for complete application procedures.

2000 Antlerless Deer License Allocation

County	Licenses	County	Licenses	County	Licenses
Adams	12,900	Fayette	13,600	Northampton	10,000
Armstrong	16,300	Forest	13,400	Northumberland	7,200
Beaver	13,800	Franklin	9,700	Perry	15,600
Bedford	20,350	Fulton	11,150	Pike	7,500
Berks	22,000	Greene	17,250	Potter	16,000
Blair	11,700	Huntingdon	21,450	Schuylkill	17,900
Bradford	22,000	Indiana	13,500	Snyder	6,100
Butler	17,600	Jefferson	10,700	Somerset	12,850
Cambria	10,250	Juniata	6,800	Sullivan	5,350
Cameron	1,400	Lackawanna	3,500	Susquehanna	8,200
Carbon	5,150	Lancaster	8,000	Tioga	19,450
Centre	16,900	Lawrence	5,100	Union	4,650
Clarion	13,000	Lebanon	6,850	Venango	13,700
Clearfield	15,500	Lehigh	7,150	Warren	18,300
Clinton	6,000	Luzerne	10,700	Washington	23,500
Columbia	13,450	Lycoming	16,750	Wayne	12,250
Crawford	17,700	McKean	15,500	Westmoreland	23,250
Cumberland	10,500	Mercer	8,950	Wyoming	4,700
Dauphin	10,200	Mifflin	7,200	York	23,950
Elk	7,850	Monroe	6,000		
Erie	14,400	Montour	2,250	**TOTAL**	**744,900**

NOTE: Special Regulation Areas: Allegheny, 30,000; Bucks, 20,000; Chester, 20,000; Delaware, 5,000; Montgomery, 10,000; and Philadelphia, 750.

First Days for Antlerless Application

By Mail		
Antlerless License (residents)	August	7
Antlerless License (nonresidents)	August	21
Private Land Antlerless License, where available	August	28
Over-the-Counter		
Regular and Private Land Antlerless License, where available	November	6
Regular Antlerless License, Special Regs. Areas	August	28

In Memoriam

F. Mason Spancake
1916 – 1999
Labor Foreman
Southeast Region
Retirement; 40 years

Lantz A. Hoffman
1936 – 1999
Director, Bureau of Information and Education
Retirement; 19 years

James F. Ritchie
1944 – 1999
Game Lands Maintenance Worker 2
Northeast Region
Died-in-Service

David E. Beinhauer
1949 – 1999
Game Conservation Officer
Northwest Region
Died-in-Service

Donald M. O'Neil
1922 – 2000
Labor Foreman
Northwest Region

Donna B. Snyder
1930 – 2000
Purchasing Agent 2
Bureau of Administration
Retirement; 23 years

George E. Drukenbrod, Sr.
1937 – 2000
Labor Foreman 1
Northwest Region
Retirement; 31 years

WCO KEN PACKARD received this year's "Officer of the Year" award from the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association. A graduate of the 20th Class from the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, Packard served as a WCO in Jefferson County until 1994, when he transferred to Clinton County. With Ken are Bill Hutson, Director of the Bureau of Law Enforcement; Mike Schmit, Deputy Executive Director; and Quig Stump, Northcentral Region Law Enforcement Supervisor.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Game Commission and NWTF partner on habitat projects

THE GAME Commission and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) will be conducting habitat improvement projects on nearly 50 state game lands. With $117,320 from nearly 30 local NWTF chapters, food plots will be created and rejuvenated to benefit wild turkeys and other species of wildlife.

"The Pennsylvania Chapter and its local chapters are vital partners in conserving and preserving the state's rich turkey hunting heritage," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Since 1985, the Pennsylvania Chapter has spent more than $1.6 million on nearly 800 projects throughout the commonwealth."

"The NWTF's efforts to complement the Game Commission have been a model for our work with other government wildlife resource agencies and for other conservation organizations," said Don O'Brien, Pennsylvania Chapter NWTF president. "Significant money and manpower directed towards improving wild turkey habitat and safety education have distinguished our chapter members as 'can-do' volunteers."

Middle Creek and Pymatuning programs and art show

AT MIDDLE CREEK, George Gress of The Nature Conservancy will present a program on nature photography on July 19 & 20. An accomplished photographer, George will show how to take good nature and wildlife photographs. Topics will include understanding proper exposure and metering, film and equipment, finding subjects, and some personal insights from 25 years of nature photography experience. Also included will be many of George's fantastic slides. Programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville.

"Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show"

Our 15th Annual Wildlife Art Show will showcase the works of more than 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. Enjoy an outstanding array of beautiful wildlife art and meet the artists who create it. Friday, August 4, Noon - 8 p.m.; Saturday, August 5, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, August 6, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

At Pymatuning, on June 15, a program on Native Americans will be held. Little Feather and Mad Bear Meza will display Native American artifacts throughout the day, and a story-telling program will be conducted at 2 p.m.

On July, 22 a program on raptor restoration will be presented. From eagles to barn owls, learn how the Game Commission has returned and protected these species. Program begins at 2 p.m.

Programs are free at Pymatuning. They are held at the visitors center near Linesville.

LOCAL CHAPTER #1 of the NWTF and the Laurel Highland Chapter of Pheasants Forever each recently donated $1,500 to the Project Wild Action Grant program. The Westmoreland County based organizations hope the grants will encourage students and teachers to become more actively involved in habitat projects and wildlife related educational programs. Allen Hoke, president of Local #1, left, Southwest Region Wildlife Education Supervisor Joe Stefko, and Pheasants Forever chapter president Ed Farzati and treasurer Bob Duffis got together for the check presentation ceremony. Through Project Wild Action grants, schools are given money to develop conservation related projects.



Game News contributors capture POWA awards

BOB SOPCHICK and GERALD PUTT received excellence of craft awards for contributions they made for *Game News* in 1999. The awards were presented at the spring meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, held this year in Huntingdon.

Sopchick captured POWA's Pennsylvania Deer Award, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Deer Association, for his "Home From the Hill" that appeared in the November '99 issue.

Putt received the "Best Published Color Art" award, sponsored by GATCO Sharpeners/Timberline Knives, for the strutting gobbler he did for the May '99 cover, and the "Best Published Black & White Art" award, sponsored by Greater Philadelphia Sport, Travel & Outdoor Show, for the pen and ink illustration of chickadees on a blackberry bush he did for the July "The Naturalists Eye" column.

The Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association is a professional organization of writers, photographers, artists, broadcasters and other communicators dedicated to informing the public of the wise use and management of our natural resources.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

When traversing forest and field, sounds, both external and internal, can tell you a lot if you pay attention and know what to listen for.

Voices

I HEAR voices. Voices in and of the forest, voices for wildlife and about hunting. Some of the voices are within me; some come from without. All I listen to, but not all do I believe.

As I write this, the woods are at their noisiest, and it's nice. It's spring and in early morning, after a cool, damp night, with the day promising mildness, the birds shout. Nothing gives voice meekly; nothing holds back. The voices are lusty, both in the word's sexual sense and in the term's idea of being fit and robust. This is high tide for the birds, and I suspect they sing because otherwise they'll burst.



Bob Steiner

CHIPMUNKS CHIRP, at anything for any reason, at any time, it seems. Sometimes summer is too hot for them, and they retreat into cool, underground burrows to wait out the heat.

Wild turkeys especially sound like this could happen. When they puff and fluff and seem to swell their body volume several times, the gobble is like an escape valve for too much life pent up in one feathery body. When a turkey hunter describes a gobble as "explosive," other hunters just nod. The sound really does strike one that way.

Smaller birds' voices have less range and magnitude than the gobbler's, but not because they're not trying. The little birds' lungpower is smaller because they are, though they try their darnedest to make up for size in extra effort. I know that I need to play my birdsong identification tapes more and learn to bird by ear. Mostly unseen but not unheard in the trees right now are the returning warblers, little birds with loud mouths. A few I recognize, many more I search for with my binoculars, only to find the big noise is coming from something that would fit in the palm of my hand, with space to spare.

Hearing so many bird voices was the oddest part of spring gobbler season, when it was instituted some decades ago. Used to hunting in the stillness of fall, I was surprised when dawn rouged the sky that inaugural morning that the forest sounded like a symphony tuning up before the overture. Every "instrument" sounded its own tone, in its own way and whenever it wanted to.

The word for jumbled up noise is "cacophony," but that isn't a fair way to describe the mix of birdsong on a May morning. Every bird's voice is pleasant; it's just that they haven't gotten together on any one tune. I have to pick out and listen to each separately to make sense of any of them. As my "job" out there is to distinguish the gobbler from among the rest of the chorus, I have to dig through a pile of voices to hear the one that means the hunt is on.

Midsummer is a quieter time in the woods. Birds are mostly reclusive, at work feeding themselves and their young-of-the-year, or maybe renesting and staying out of sight of what would feed on them. Hawks sometimes scream overhead, riding summer's columns of warm air rising against hillsides. Chipmunks chirp, at anything for any reason, at any time, it seems. Sometimes summer is too hot for them, and they retreat into cool, underground burrows to wait out the heat and dry, just like they did the cold and snow of winter.

Fall voices begin with the crickets. Just as spring doesn't seem to be here "officially" unless the peepers sing, autumn is started in my mind when I first hear the crickets. On an early fall night, the crickets become deafening, drowning out other darkside sounds, and I come as close as I ever will to yelling to my yard, "Shut up!" When the crickets stop, with a frost too much, I feel the loss. I am compensated by knowing that with the season's change we're getting to the heart of the hunting seasons.

Autumn voices are muted, at least once the geese have gone south. The tundra swans pass overhead late, usually while I'm rifle deer hunting or toward the end of small game season, the great whites' "honking" more of a "Whoo-whoo," than their cousin Canadas'. The swans' voice is just different enough from the geese that even if I don't look up (maybe I don't want to make that much movement when I'm on stand), I know that the last of the fall migrants have gone by and we can settle into winter.

As a hunter, I sit in the forest and find it has a voice, too. Dr. Seuss might have had the Lorax say: "I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues," but I'm not sure that's true. Not all voices make words or need to. The sifting rustle of leaves falling on a still day; the crash and thud of a tree falling naturally, its time upright done at last; the bare-bones rattle of leafless limbs in a pre-storm wind; the rifle-crack of wood splitting on a subzero morning: all tell a story. I know some of what happens in the forest is too quiet and small and takes place on a scale too slow for me to hear it, like the pushing outward from bud to flower, the growth at twig-tips, the grain-by-grain wearing away of rock by intermittent drips of water.

Not all the voices I hear, in and about the outdoors, are in the wordless language of wildlife, trees and natural forces. Not all voices reach my ears from the outside. Some words well up from within, whispering in my mind and heard by an audience of one. Alone in the woods, the words that come at me are not those that bombard from the constant human to-do and technological audio mix at home, office, shopping center or some highway between. In those hectic places, there's scarce chance of my inside voice being heard, at least at length.

In the forest, on a solo hunt, it's different. I've heard some say that being alone in the woods is a chance for meditation. True, I'm by myself, but I wouldn't call what happens in my mind meditation. My outer consciousness is busy with the project at

hand, like waiting out a squirrel that ducked into a hole in a tree or watching with bow or gun for a deer to come down the deer trail. Deeper in my brain, I hear an inner voice rambling. It doesn't do a lot of talking about set subjects, doesn't formally discuss things I've been meaning to give thought to and that have now come up on the agenda. Instead, I sit and listen to the woods and wildlife with my outward ears, and let the inside voices go where they will.

Topics emerge that I didn't even know were kicking around in there. Conversations and songs I've heard repeat in my head unbidden, like a daytime dream. Sometimes I find the internal voices weighing opposing sides of some dilemma, hear the pros and cons again; I suddenly realize the interior talk has made up my mind for me. The words in my head don't always resemble a debate, but just as often are a rehashing of information, a review of the newsreel of my life and an imagining of what may come.

I don't take notes when my interior voice speaks, but maybe I should. I know others, some who keep personal journals and others who are writers on the lookout for article ideas, who have small notebooks and pencils in their hunting coats or packs at all times. If I could ever compose poetry, it would be what's spoken within me, when I'm afield. But I've always lost the thought, the feeling and the words once I got back to the car and found paper and pen. Voices that come from the inside are as transient as those that briefly ride the wind.

I've always felt there is no untarnished good news and no absolute despairingly bad news. When I hear others speaking about the wild outdoors and wildlife, and what's to become of them, I know this chestnut is true: every cloud has both a silver lining and a hint of thunder and lightning. I listen to voices from all over on what we should hunt, and when, and how, and how many and even if. Every speaker believes as truth what he or she says, though they're 180-out. When I'm alone in the woods and their words come back in my daydreams, I hear again their convincing logic and angry passion. I find no right and no wrong, just a lot of space between where I must find a bit of solid ground on which to stand and believe.



Bob Steiner

THIS FALL when I'm hunting I expect to hear voices again, of soughing wind and scolding crows.

This fall when I'm hunting I expect to hear voices again, of soughing wind and scolding squirrels, and anticipate my internal conversation to be an active chat. With important elections coming up, including for the United States' President, I'll be reviewing in my mind again what the candidates said and what's been said about them, especially in what matters greatly to me: sportsmen's issues, firearms issues, conservation issues, and environment quality concerns. I may not be able to marry all these into support for one nominee, and I expect the words that go 'round in my head will be strong opinions in many directions. I'm counting on cross talk to be the tiebreaker to the debate, as the virtual words in my mind meet the reality of the wild voices around me. Then I'll know what to do. □

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

This month starts off our new fiscal year, and our new annual work budget takes effect. Mowing food plots takes priority this month, and we hope our equipment holds up.

JULY SEEMED to come around fast last year. I often wonder why the warm months slip by so much faster than the cold ones. Most wild animals are now raising young, black bears are coming to the end of their breeding season, and the bucks are starting to sport some pretty impressive antlers. The cool season grasses are losing their greenness, while the warm season grasses are just beginning their growth cycle. Insects are abundant everywhere, and bee encounters are commonplace as our work continues on state game lands.

I met a man today who said, "The Game Commission never does anything on game lands except cut timber." This belief held by many is so untrue. When I started to explain about the work the crew accomplishes, he said, "You mean the Game Commission still has the Food and Cover Corps? I thought they quit that in the '60s." Many people don't realize the Game Commission has people in each county whose job it is to maintain and develop wildlife habitat on state game lands. Maybe it's because these men and women are out working through the week, when most people are at their jobs, or maybe it's because we as an agency have done a poor job of communicating to the public what our land management activities are all about. One of the reasons I'm writing this column is to share with you what our first-line ground troops are accomplishing and why. I also feel it's important to explain how some of your hunting license dollars are spent locally. I want you to know about this group of hard working, dedicated folks called the Food and Cover Corps.



MOWING wavy strips through food plots provides diversity in height of grass, which is beneficial to wildlife.

As we continue with this "LMO Diary," I hope you learn that there are many people involved at different levels who all contribute to managing the state's wildlife. It's because of all these people that we

have the habitat and wildlife on our game lands.

Week One

Each year we develop a work plan that lists the habitat and maintenance goals we hope to accomplish on each game lands. The annual work plans go into effect each July, the start of our fiscal year. In our region Land Management Supervisor Keith Harbaugh assigns each LMO an allotted amount of money to meet our crew's annual needs. This money is spent on seed, lime, fertilizer, equipment purchases and repairs, tools, heat and electric for our buildings, gasoline and oil, agricultural supplies, and our salaries and benefits. This money allows our crews to complete the work we have planned. This year, with my new budget, I'm able to purchase a new 10-foot mower and rebuild the transmission on an old tractor. Both of these expenditures will enable the crew to work more efficiently and accomplish more.

There are many people involved at different levels who all contribute to managing the state's wildlife. These people are the reason we have the habitat and wildlife on our game lands.

With spring planting behind us, the crews go full swing into mowing. This year, Everett's crew (Jefferson County) will mow approximately 250 acres of food plots and 130 miles of grassy roads, while Gary's crew (Clarion County) will mow about 300 acres of food plots and 50 miles of grassy roads. Mowing keeps the woody growth from invading our grassy areas, helps to control weeds and keep grasses and legumes succulent, and it provides different levels of grass height, all of which are beneficial to wildlife. If you see some of our food plots you will notice that we mow wavy strips through them. These strips are beneficial to wildlife as they create high grass areas between the low succulent growth. The long grass attracts and holds insects, which in turn provide an important food source for young turkeys, grouse and other animals. The high grass provides close cover for the poults to evade avian predators.

In the winter, when the rest of the food plot is covered in crusty snow, these dead grass tops stick out, providing seeds for birds and dry matter for deer to eat. The following spring, these dead grass stems can provide perches for small songbirds. The strips help break up a sight picture and give small game an edge against hunters and predators. So the next time you see these wavy mowed strips, you will know it was intentional.

While mowing, the operators must keep a sharp eye out for wildlife. At the sound of the coming tractor, some animals stay put and hide. Dave Miller narrowly missed a turkey that finally flushed directly in front of his tractor, and Willard Kline told me about a fawn that ran out between the wheels of his mowing rig. Close encounters like this are quite a surprise, just like mowing over a nest of ground hornets, then we get some really wavy strips!

I close out the week by attending a meeting of the Sigel Sportsman's Club, to update them on our accomplishments last year and planned projects for the coming year. I try to attend as many clubs in my area as possible, to explain our projects and to get feedback from the people using our game lands.

Week Two

Foreman Gary Maxwell and I attend a meeting with engineer Jim Fagley from the EADS Group to discuss a bridge replacement on SGL 72. We visit the site and discuss impacts to wildlife, habitats, erosion

controls, conflicts with hunting seasons, and parking lot usage. We support this project because it will provide hunters with easy access to SGL 72 on both sides of Toby Creek.

Both crews continue annual mowing as I examine a piece of property we would like to purchase for game lands in southern Jefferson County. This property is presently posted. I assess the quality of existing wildlife habitat, as well as the potential of the land to support certain species. This type of exam takes all day, as I classify the tree, shrub and grass species, look for wetlands, streams, ponds, rock outcroppings or caves, roads, access, existing rights-of-way, pollution, wildlife, reptiles, and any unique features that may exist. After walking around the property for most of the day, taking notes, I'm pleased with what I find but am concerned with a small acid mine drainage site located on the property. I will later contact the Department of Environmental Protection to see if they have any water quality data for this discharge.



ACID MINE drainage sites are a common form of pollution in areas that were previously strip-mined. These sites reduce the habitat value to wildlife and people.

I stop at the Clarion County food and cover headquarters in Shippenville and find that one of the guys hit a hidden rock and snapped a blade on our Woods mower. We call around to find the replacement parts needed, and will be back mowing by the next morning. While at the building I discuss ATV problems on SGL 63 with deputies Mike Leahy and Dave Aaron.

Assistant Regional Forester Bryce Hall and I meet a timber operator who is requesting a temporary road use permit. This company will be cutting on an adjacent property and is requesting permission to use a short portion of a game lands road to bring their timber out. After inspecting the area, we discuss use limitations during hunting season, permit fees, bonding, a culvert to be installed, and gravel to be applied at the road entrance, which also serves as a parking lot for hunters. I give him a permit application, and we leave to inspect a proposed timber sale on SGL 54 near Sugar Hill.

This time of year our Farm-Game managers Lee Jordan and Tom Deitz receive a break from their normal duties of administering the Farm-Game Cooperative Access properties, to help with mowing on game lands. Our game lands food plots are spread out across the county, which is good for wildlife but requires the trucking of equipment from place to place. The members of the food and cover crew know these game lands well, and the best way to mow from plot "A" to plot "B." They remember where most of the hidden rocks, stumps, old pipe and rattlesnake dens are located, and try to avoid these areas. They also know all the shortcuts and most of the adjoining landowners.

At the end of the week I conduct another land exam, this time in Clarion County. If we were to purchase this, it would give hunters another access to existing game lands. The owner of this par-

cel has created food plots, fruit trees and conifer cover, as well as wetlands. It has a stream that runs diagonally through it. It is a nice property, but again I find an acid mine drainage site. This one is presently being treated through a passive system. The Game Commission is allowed to spend no more than $400 per acre. The price is also dependent upon what we find during our land exam. If there is poor habitat, poor access, pollution, limited mineral rights, etc., the value will be less than the maximum we can spend. On this site, the acid mine drainage, although treated, will decrease the value of this property.

Week Three

While inspecting access roads for repairs on SGL 244, I come across an active gas well that appears to have a leak in the brine tank. Upon closer inspection, I find that the tank is not leaking, but has been drained onto the ground. The salt brine has run off the site, down the slope, and into an existing stream. There is no excuse for this situation, as I know there is a well tender here on a regular basis. I gather the needed information and will contact Waterways Conservation Officer Rick Valazak, and also DEP in Knox. This situation appears to have been going on for some time and is very obvious. Draining the tank this way is wrong, and I will push for this company to be prosecuted. Finding this situation causes me to inspect all other known gas wells belonging to them.

After spending half the day at the computer, I'm glad to get out of the office to meet Willard Kline on SGL 72 and mow with him in the afternoon. I enjoy mowing and also feel it's important for me to be capable of performing the same duties I ask of my men. It puts certain things into perspective, such as how much a person can accomplish with a seven foot mower, and how painful a yellow jacket encounter can be.

I am inspecting areas on SGL 74 to complete some grouse habitat work when I discover an old house foundation. This old homestead is adjacent to an old road that is grown up in trees. As I explore this new find, I locate the foundation, a couple of old apple trees, and a wet depression I believe to be the old spring. Obviously, it has been a while since the building came down, as there are 8-inch diameter trees growing up within the foundation.

I wonder what life was like for the people who lived here and what the surroundings must have looked like back then. I wonder if they thought life was hard. As I kick through the leaves I find an empty rifle casing. It is so corroded that I am unable to identify it, and I wonder if it belonged to the owner of the house or from a hunter who was here for only a couple of minutes and, perhaps, shot a nice buck. The call of a summer bird brings me back to my task at hand.

On Friday night we have a retirement dinner for both of my food and cover foremen who retired earlier this year. Glenn Sanders from Clarion County and Joe Snyder from Jefferson County. Both men served the sportsmen and wildlife of our area for many years. I was happy for the couple of years I was able to work with them. Both these men had an incredible amount of knowledge, and have been around for such a long time that they knew much of the history of our game lands. I will certainly miss them, not only for the way they made my job so much easier, but also for the friendships we developed.

Week Four

The end of the month draws our mowing to a close for another year. I am thankful that the equipment held up to the task. As usual, my crews did a good job and made the best of a job that is fun but grows old after a month and a half. They get a break as they complete their monthly reports and plan for the new mix of projects to catch up on in August. I go on leave to spend some time with my family and catch up on my own family projects. □

Secretive and seldom seen, it's a good thing the wood thrush can be heard. Its song is considered one of the most pleasing in the bird world.

"Minstrel of the Woods"

I DON'T HAVE to leave this planet to hear the music of the spheres. Surely, listening to wood thrushes singing is as ethereal an experience as any mortal can hope for. Many evenings when I step outside, wood thrush song envelops me so that it seems as if all the world's wood thrushes are singing on our mountain.



Most years I can count on the first wood thrush song between April 30 and May 5, and the absolute last wood thrush song near the end of July. But in 1997 I heard a wood thrush singing on August 5. The following summer a wood thrush broke that record by singing for a few brief moments at dawn on August 12. Then, last summer, the final date was August 3.

No matter when it happens, though, I listen with an impending sense of loss throughout July. Once again, time is running out, and I have not yet had my fill of wood thrush music. They are with us too short a time, singing like what I imagine angels would sound like, then leave me bereft the rest of the year. Yet, I wonder if I would be as enchanted by wood thrush song if I heard it all year long or if familiarity would breed, if not contempt, inattention?

Of course, what

is exquisite music to me is serious business for wood thrushes. As soon as the males return from their fall and winter homes in the lowland tropical forests from southern Mexico to Panama, they sing loudly from elevated, exposed perches, intent on attracting females and defending their one-quarter to 2-acre territories from other males.

Song duels between males, called "countersinging" by ornithologists, in which two males come to within 10 yards of each other and alternate songs, are common during territorial disputes. When females arrive, males chase them and sing aggressively. Each male tries to attract a female to settle in his territory. Once he does so, the males sing in lower, hidden sites.

Since the 1970s, wood thrush numbers have fallen, on both their breeding and wintering grounds. In Pennsylvania, fragmented forest habitat appeared to be the most critical issue.

But there are singers and then there are the outstanding virtuosos. The flutelike *eeohlay* is learned from adult wood thrush males during the fledgling stage. But both his mostly inaudible, short note introduction and trill-like ending are either innate or invented. Each part of his song has several variations and every male has his own repertoire. For instance, one Ohio male sang 18 patterns out of 90 possible ones based on his variations, according to a study conducted by D.J. Borror and C.R. Reese entitled "Vocal gymnastics in Wood Thrush Songs" back in the early 1950s. Another study of 115 wood thrush songs by Aretas Saunders showed ranges as wide as two octaves with the average thrush's range of slightly more than an octave.

I well remember the organ-like tones of a particularly varied wood thrush song I listened to one evening in a darkening wood. To my ears, the singer seemed to be singing for the pure joy of it. Whether birds have a musical sense is still debatable among scientists, but there is no doubt that they use musical devices, such as crescendo and diminuendo, as well as complex musical phrases, and that they continue to develop their songs long after they have mated and established a territory. In fact, after a lull in their singing in early June, when they are busy feeding nestlings, wood thrushes begin singing again in July with almost as much intensity as in May, and I often hear them countersinging.

One July evening along the Short Circuit Trail I counted three wood thrushes singing at the same time, each song coming from a different direction. On other summer evenings my walks take me from one singing wood thrush to another as I move in and out of a succession of thrush territories. Long after I return home, my ears ring with their tremulous echoes and vibratos and, like Henry David Thoreau, the wood thrush's song "touches a depth in me which no other bird's song does . . . it lifts and exhilarates me." The wood thrush, he writes, is the "minstrel of the woods," the "master of a finer-toned instrument . . . a Shakespeare among birds . . . "

Also known as "bellbird," "song thrush" and "swamp angel," the wood thrush's genus name *Hylocichla* is Greek for "wood thrush" while its species name *mustelina* means "weasel-like" in Latin, referring to its tawny head, wings and back, which are supposed to resemble the color of a weasel. Otherwise, the wood thrush has a white breast and belly, liberally sprinkled with larger round or oval black spots.

The nicknames, "swamp robin" and "wood robin," refer to its membership in the thrush family along with other out-

standing singers such as the American robin. Like robins, wood thrushes forage on the ground by hopping and then pausing to search. They also toss leaves aside and probe the earth with their bills.

Once a male attracts a female, they engage in sexual chasing in which the female leads the way during silent, circular flights, interspersed by perching together. Copulation occurs on branches, and most pairs are monogamous through the nesting season, which includes the raising of two broods. A small percentage nest with the same mate a second season. One female was unusually loyal, mating with the same male five years in a row and then with another male for three years.



The female chooses the nest site with some input from the male, who indicates his preference by *pit-pit* calls and by bringing nesting material to the spot, even though the female does the nest-building. It takes three to six days to fashion the cup-shape nest, anchored in a hidden tree crotch or shrub or on a branch five to 20 feet from the ground. Resembling a robin's nest in shape, it is distinguished by a lining of rootlets and often has a piece of paper or white cloth hanging from the base. The ones I have found here incorporate a piece of plastic from the old farm dump instead of the cloth or paper. During the 1970s, when we had a large population of wood thrushes, I once found three nests within a couple hundred feet, constructed in mountain laurel shrubs.

The female usually lays three or four blue-green eggs, and incubates them from 12 to 13 days, while the male perches on trees 20 to 30 yards from the nest and feeds, sings or preens. He also guards the nest by standing on or next to the nest rim and sometimes sings while the female forages. He occasionally brings her food, and if an intruder approaches the nest, he freezes.

Once the eggs hatch, the male does two-thirds of the feeding until the nestlings fledge, at 12 to 15 days of age. Then the parents divide up the brood and continue feeding them until they become independent and leave their parents' territory, at 21 to 31 days of age. By then the female has begun laying her second clutch of eggs.

Since the 1970s, wood thrush numbers have fallen, both on their breeding and wintering grounds. Researchers in the Midwest point to excessive parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds, which lay their eggs in other birds' nests for them to raise. The cowbirds grow faster and are more aggressive than the nest-builder's young, so usually the host species raises less of its own offspring. But in Pennsylvania, Jeffrey Hoover and Margaret Brittingham found

that despite a nine percent cowbird parasitism rate on wood thrush nests, there were no nest failures.

On the other hand, in a study done at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary by Hoover, Brittingham and Laurie Goodrich in 1990, fragmented forest habitat appeared to be the more critical issue. Wood thrush nests in small forest patches were more heavily preyed upon than those in larger forests.

Researchers have found that the primary predators on wood thrush eggs, nestlings, and fledglings are blue jays, common grackles, American crows, gray and southern flying squirrels, chipmunks, least weasels, white-footed mice, black rat snakes, sharp-shinned hawks, raccoons, and pet and feral cats. But large, mature forests with well-developed understories provide better protection from predators.

Such forests are also an excellent source of the beetles, ants, caterpillars, moths, flies, bugs, spiders, sow bugs, snails and earthworms that wood thrushes eat in the summer and feed their young. Later, after the fledglings have dispersed, and during migration, wood thrushes switch to fruits. Then they prefer more open areas that support fruit-bearing shrubs, vines and trees such as spicebush, fox grapes, blueberry, blackberry, mulberry, holly, elderberry, Virginia creeper, pokeweed, dogwood, black cherry and black gum trees.

Here in Pennsylvania the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual Breeding Bird Survey recorded its highest number of wood thrushes per route (22) in 1977. Since then there has been a slow decline, but during the Pennsylvania breeding bird atlasing project — from 1983 to 1990 — atlas volunteers found wood thrushes throughout the state in every county. Pennsylvania also holds the record for the longest-lived wood thrush — eight years and 10 months.

As long as suitable woodland habitat remains for wood thrushes here, along their migration route, and on their wintering grounds, wood thrushes will survive. As Thoreau wrote on July 5, 1852, "The thrush alone declares the immortal wealth and vigor that is in the forest . . . Whenever a man hears it, he is young, and Nature is in her Spring." □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

The *Field & Stream* Hunting Library, by Lyons Press, 123 West 18 Street, New York, New York 10011, 128 pp., $9.95 each; plus $4 shipping for one book, $1 for shipping each additional book. The Lyons Press is proud to introduce six new books for beginning and expert outdoorsmen alike. The editors and writers of *Field & Stream* bring their years of experience to the subjects of most interest to hunters across the United States, from bowhunting to firearms safety to deer hunting. **The *Field & Stream* Deer Hunting Handbook,** by Jerome B. Robinson and the editors of *F & S*, provides key strategies for hunting and tracking the most elusive and sought-after big game animal in North America. **The *Field & Stream* Firearms Safety Handbook,** by Doug Painter and the editors of *F & S*, is the first, last and most important thing to know about handling firearms safely. **The *Field & Stream* Upland Bird Hunting Handbook,** by Bill Tarrant and the editors of *F & S*, offers the best practical advice on how to locate and hunt all of the popular gamebirds in North America. **The *Field & Stream* Bowhunting Handbook,** by Bob Robb and the editors of *F & S*, reveals in detail how to shoot accurately and hunt with the compound bow. **The *Field & Stream* Shooting Sports Handbook,** by Tom McIntyre and the editors of *F & S*, is a practical and engaging guide covering all aspects of the shooting sports. **The *Field & Stream* Turkey Hunting Handbook,** by Philip Bourjaily and the editors of *F & S*, is the perfect guide for hunting turkeys in the spring and fall.

In a recent survey, 37 percent of hunters who hunted from a treestand reported they had fallen and suffered an injury. Here are some tips to help you avoid . . .

A Fall From Above

A FEW YEARS ago a local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation asked me to present a seminar at the organization's annual meeting. I was told I could choose the topic and that it didn't have to be about turkey hunting. Other presenters were doing turkey related topics, so I chose something different. I've often said most bowhunters are also turkey hunters, so I felt there would be sufficient interest in an archery related topic.

I chose to speak about treestand safety, because of the misfortune that befell two of my friends. One suffered a severely broken ankle when the limb he was using to descend the tree broke, sending him crashing to the ground. He was out of work for more than two years while his ankle stubbornly refused to mend. In another instance, a friend suffered a broken wrist and severe abrasions when the climbing treestand he was using slipped while he was ascending a tree. He recovered, but the rest of his archery season was lost.

Before beginning my presentation, I counted more than 80 individuals in the room. I was pleased my bowhunting topic generated so much interest. Little did I know that many of those present had more than a passing interest in treestand safety. I asked if anyone had ever been involved in a treestand related mishap. I expected to see a few raised hands, but astonishingly, more than 30 went up. The victims described a variety of injuries, mostly minor but some were serious. Their testimony provided insight as to how treestand incidents happen and suggested a course of action for reducing the risk when hunting from trees.

Treestand use increased as bowhunting grew in popularity. Unfortunately, the rate of incidents involving treestands also increased. In a 1993 survey published by *Deer and Deer Hunting* magazine, 37 percent of hunters who hunted from a treestand reported they had fallen and suffered an injury.

The seminar participants described a variety of circumstances contributing to each fall. I discovered that most incidents occurred when archers were either climbing or descending a tree. The statements of the participants are consistent with published survey results as to the leading cause of treestand accidents. One hunter told me he suffered a broken back when he fell asleep while on watch. He didn't know how long he remained unconscious before a pair of hikers found him lying at the base of the tree. He did recover and still bowhunts from a tree.



CLIMBING ladders are the safest way to climb a tree. One with enclosed steps helps in preventing a wet or muddy boot from slipping off.

Lack of common sense, equipment failure, darkness and cold or wet weather were leading causes of falls by the archers to whom I spoke. As with the case of my friend with the broken ankle, breaking tree limbs contributed to the falls of more than a few archers. I was surprised by the number of archers who told me they frequently place all their weight on a tree limb while getting into, out of, or when erecting a portable stand. Doing so without a safety harness can be an invitation to disaster.

My good friend Tom Yacovella of Utica, New York, fell more than 30 feet when a thick limb on which he was standing broke while he was erecting a portable treestand. Yacovella is one of the finest hunters and woodsmen I have ever encountered, and he is practically a legend among those who know him and who hunt the Adirondack Mountains. Yacovella often hunts wilderness areas, and I've never known him to take unnecessary risks. Yet despite years of hunting experience, Yacovella became another statistic when he plunged to the ground, breaking his back, arm and leg.

Unable to lift his head, he struggled back to his vehicle, pulling himself with one good arm and pushing with his remaining good leg. With little feeling left in his body, Yacovella crawled for nearly 11 grueling hours until he reached a road. Several passing cars either didn't see or ignored him lying on the roadside. Finally, a passing motorist stopped and heard his calls for help. Yacovella endured six hours of surgery to fuse his broken vertebrae. Today, two titanium rods and four titanium bolts hold his back together. His story appeared in the October 1998 *Outdoor Life*, and is an eye opener for those who think it can't happen to them.

Treestand incidents can be prevented or bodily injury minimized, however, if hunters take proper precautions. Ideally, a harness should be worn while ascending or descending any tree. Softwood trees such as white pine and hemlocks are common in many areas and are easy to climb. They offer good concealment and are favorite locations for placing a treestand. However, pines and hemlocks have many protruding branches. Whenever possible, a hunter should select a safer tree to climb.

When ascending or descending any tree, I never place all my weight on a single limb. I place each foot as close to the trunk as possible, taking advantage of the limb's inherent strength. I never place my foot or hand on a dead limb and always select the largest limb available. When warranted, I strap a tree step on to the trunk rather than risk injury by using a questionable limb.

Some would argue that to be perfectly safe, never use a limb to climb a tree. That is undoubtedly excellent advice, but I don't know anyone who hunts from a treestand, myself included, who doesn't occasionally use a limb for climbing. The idea for accident prevention is to use common sense, and if a limb is used for climbing, it shouldn't be depended upon to be the sole means of support.

Statistics show many treestand-related injuries occur when the hunter attempts to get into or out of a stand. To avoid this type of incident, consider taking the last step into the stand from above. This means an extra step must be strapped onto the tree, placing the hunter above the stand. Stepping down onto the platform from above is considered much safer than trying to step up and onto it from below. When exiting the stand at the end of the hunt, stepping onto a visible step is far safer than trying to blindly grope your way to a step somewhere on the tree trunk beneath you.

When descending a tree, never detach a safety harness or belt until you're safely out of the stand and your feet are firmly planted on a step or ladder. Better yet, remain attached to the tree until both feet are firmly on the ground. Be as deliberate climbing down the tree as you were climbing up. Force yourself to think of every move before stepping on the next step or limb. Don't be in a hurry, especially when following up on a shot. Mental lapses are a leading contributor to falls. More than one excited hunter has stepped out of his stand after taking a shot. The excitement associated with getting a big buck causes even the most seasoned hunters to sometimes suffer mental lapses. An old high school coach often said, "Keep your head in the game." It's sound advice for bowhunters, too.

Tree steps are considered to be safer for climbing than tree limbs, and many hunters use them. Screw-in tree steps are not permitted on public land in Pennsylvania, but with written permission, they can be used on private property. Regardless of the type of tree step used, either strap-on or screw-in, improperly installed tree steps contribute to many climbing injuries. Improperly installed steps can snap, straps can break or rivets can fail. In addition, screw-in steps can pull out of a tree if the hunter uses pre-drilled or old holes. Strap-on steps can loosen and slip, or the attaching belt can break if the hunter doesn't check each one before every hunt.

Regardless of the type of step used, using too few steps contributes to many falls when the hunter tries to stretch or reach too far. This is especially critical when the weather is cold and the body stiffens up and is hindered by extra clothes. Trying to reach a step placed too far away invites disaster. Be sure to place the steps close enough together so that the footholds are in close proximity and excess reaching is minimized.

A good, although heavier, alternative to using tree steps is a climbing ladder. Climbing ladders are more expensive and offer less mobility than tree steps, but they are a better alternative for climbing trees. They are easier to erect and to remove than are tree steps, and they are much safer. Be sure to use a harness and secure yourself to the tree while installing a tree steps or a ladder stand.

A variety of ladders is on the market and, for safety reasons, I prefer using one



IT'S IMPERATIVE that hunters remain attached to the tree with a safety harness while climbing or erecting a treestand.



A SAFETY HARNESS that goes over the shoulders is safer than a single belt, which could suffocate a hunter who is left hanging after falling from a stand. Better yet is a body harness that includes the legs.

with enclosed steps. The enclosure or loop around the step prevents a wet or muddy boot from slipping off the step when ascending or descending a tree. This is an important safety feature when hunting during wet or snowy weather.

It should be noted that ladder units have inherent problems of their own. They are quite safe once installed properly, but they are prone to trouble while being installed. If the hunter starts climbing an unsecured climbing ladder, the ladder can roll around the tree if the climber leans too far to one side. If using a climbing ladder or ladder stand, be sure to read the manufacturer's directions for proper installation.

Once in the stand, a hunter is reasonably safe unless he falls asleep or the stand collapses. Modern, commercially made treestands are well made and safe, but there are still many homemade and old style stands still in use. These usually are the ones cited in statistics.

Most bowhunters I know wear a safety belt while in their stand, keeping them reasonably secure. But wearing a safety belt is no guarantee a hunter won't be injured or even killed if he somehow finds himself suspended far above the forest floor.

Last fall an Allentown man was found dead, hanging from his safety belt. Published reports said the stand he was hunting from collapsed and the safety belt tightened around his chest, suffocating him. Hanging above ground from a safety harness happens more often than you'd think, and hunters who have told me that it happened to them said they were fortunate to be rescued by a nearby companion. They say the experience is something they never want to go through again. Admittedly, a safety belt is better than nothing, but using the proper belt can be a significant factor in preventing serious incidents.

For years I used a belt composed of a single strap that looks like an automobile seat belt. I wore the belt beneath my armpits rather than around my waist, to avoid suffocation in the event of a fall. Recently, I began using a more effective type of belt, one that slips over the shoulders and snaps closed around the chest. I thought this was a good arrangement until I discovered a newer version of this harness.

The full body harness goes around the chest and shoulders and secures the hunter with leg straps as well. It looks and works like the type of harness worn by paratroopers. If a hunter is wearing this type of safety device and the stand collapses, he may be shaken but is unlikely to be seriously hurt. When purchasing a full body harness, look for one with a metal buckle. In my opinion, plastic buckles have no place on safety harnesses or belts and should be avoided.

Many treestand mishaps occur because a hunter buys a new stand and fails to read the directions regarding its use. Modern treestands are sturdy, safe and have many built-in safety features. (Look for stands certified by the Treestand Manufacturer's Association.) However, a hunter must be familiar with how the stand works before

going afield. If using a climbing stand, be sure you understand how to properly adjust the bar, cable or band that goes around the tree. Be certain to try the stand on several different tree trunks, noting how it reacts to the bark of various trees. Some smooth-barked trees, such as beeches, can be tricky to climb when the bark is wet.

Be sure to secure the hand-climber to the platform with a rope. If your feet slip out of the climbing harness on the platform, the stand won't fall to the ground and leave you stranded halfway up the tree.

No matter what stand you use, be certain to understand and respect the shortcomings inherent in each type. Ladder stands, while quite safe once you are in them, can be tricky to erect. Climbing stands can be difficult to adjust once you have ascended the tree, so be sure you know how to adjust the stand before taking it to the woods. Permanent stands rot and may collapse after only a few seasons. In addition, swaying trees and weather can cause nails to pull loose or rust away, making the stand a potential killer. If you use a permanent stand be certain to thoroughly check it before using it during hunting season.

When first trying out a new treestand, do so near the ground. A foot or so from the ground is sufficient. Before climbing into any stand, be sure to determine how the stand attaches to the tree and carefully check for any broken or missing parts.

Climbing trees during inclement weather contributes to many mishaps. The bark of some, if not most, trees can be as slippery as ice when wet. I'm usually a cautious person, but admittedly, the only time I ever had a scary encounter using a treestand occurred while attempting to climb into my stand one snowy afternoon.

Packed snow had built up on the soles of my hunting boots and made climbing tricky. I remember being unusually cautious that afternoon but, despite extra precaution, my feet unexpectedly slipped from beneath me. Fortunately, I was holding on with both hands and was able to gain my balance. That episode convinced me to either depend on a climbing ladder or to hunt from the ground when there's snow.

When I was younger and more foolish, I used to tell my wife not to worry about me when I was in the woods. "I can take care of myself," I told her. Nonsense. I was breaching serious safety etiquette with so foolish an attitude. A serious accident can happen to anyone. It's more than just prudent to inform someone exactly where you will be hunting, it's a necessity. Now when I go hunting, I make sure someone knows where I'll be and about what time I'll be back. If something happens, I know it won't be too long before someone comes looking for me. If I get a deer and expect a long drag, I tag and field-dress it, then leave it until I call my wife. I have driven up to 10 miles to find a phone, but the peace of mind is worth it. Modern cell phones make that task easier. Now my wife knows if I'm late and don't call within a reasonable amount of time, something could have happened.

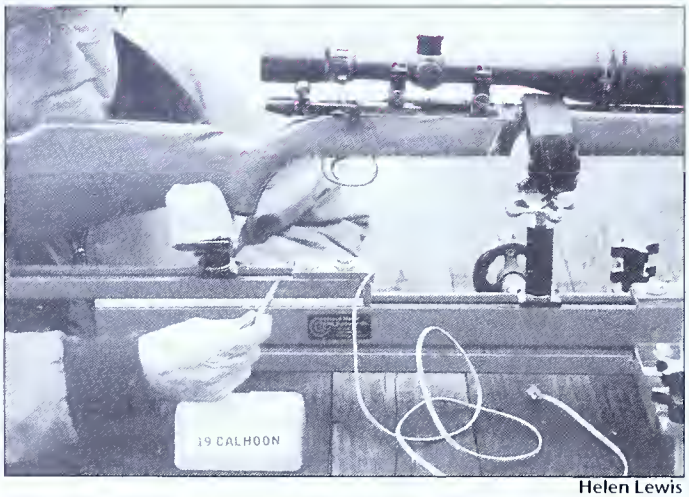
To make archery hunting safer, a multifaceted approach is necessary. User error is unquestionably the primary cause of treestand mishaps and usually involves the hunter not paying attention to what he was doing or not taking the proper safety precautions while using a tree climbing device. Reaching a little too far for a limb or step may work for a while, but luck has a way of running out. Complacency leads to more mishaps than most people realize.

Finally, when climbing any tree, use a haul line to raise or lower the bow, fanny pack or other equipment. Climbing requires concentration, and having something strapped to your torso or in your hand can be distracting and even dangerous.

Hunting from treestands is a popular way to hunt deer. Mishaps can and do happen, but they can be minimized, if not prevented entirely, by using good equipment and common sense. By knowing what causes treestand mishaps we can take steps to prevent them and prevent a fall from above. □

Looking back over the decades, it's obvious that some cartridges and rifle models made a perfect marriage. The Model 99 Savage will always be linked with the .300 Savage cartridge. What cartridge is the Winchester Model 94 lever action rifle associated with?

The Romance of Guns and Cartridges



Helen Lewis

WHILE DISCUSSING famous cartridges, in the future some inspiring gun writer might be touting the .19 Calhoon (a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber). The Calhoon's extra speed and possible better ballistic coefficents add an extra 100 yards to the Hornet's effective field range.

MILITARY RECORDS show that Tim Murphy was from the Northumberland area, and that he served with Morgan's Pennsylvania Shirt Men during the Revolutionary War. Legend has it that at the Second Battle of Freeman's Farm, Murphy used an over-under rifle made for him by John Golcher of Easton to kill a British officer at long range.

The British, commanded by General Simon Fraser, about 300 yards away, were moving toward the Americans, and Morgan ordered some of his men to climb some trees to get a better look and possibly bring down Fraser. Murphy was one of the men chosen. It wasn't long before their rifles began to crack, but the general continued galloping his horse along the line of troops, shouting encouragement to his advancing men. Murphy waited until Fraser was within 200 yards before firing the first shot, which apparently hit Fraser's horse. Rotating the barrels, he fired again and missed. He rapidly reloaded. Aiming carefully, he touched the set trigger for his third shot. General Fraser stiffened and slowly slid from his horse. He was fatally wounded, and his loss cost the British what is now called the Battle of

Saratoga, which many historians claim was the turning point in the Revolutionary War.

Although Murphy's two-barrel Golcher was a flintlock, it has to be included with firearms that are steeped in fame and legend.

With many famous firearms, it's hard to separate the cartridge from the rifle. A good example of this is the .30-30 Winchester cartridge (sometimes referred to as the .30 WCF) and the Model 94 Winchester rifle. The .30-30 cartridge was the first American small-bore smokeless powder sporting cartridge. It made its debut around 1895 in the Winchester Model 94 lever action rifle. It's still popular 105 years later, and for many years it was claimed to have killed more deer in Pennsylvania than all other cartridges combined. Through the years the .30-30 was chambered in other types of actions, but it's a rare hunter who doesn't associate the .30-30 cartridge with the Winchester Model 94 lever action rifle.

The .35 Whelen came to life in 1922 (I was one year old) through the efforts of James Howe of the famous Griffin & Howe firm. Howe was a great admirer of Colonel Townsend Whelen, so he named the cartridge after him. It's nothing more than a .30-06 case necked up to the 35-caliber. The .35 Whelen, however, would have to wait until 1987 before Remington finally standardized the old wildcat. This is hard to believe as the .35 Whelen was being cranked out by custom rifle builders for big game hunters who wanted a medium-bore cartridge that could be used in a standard-length action. Right from its inception, the .35 Whelen was chambered in bolt action rifles, so it was quite a surprise when Remington offered it in their Model 7600 slide action rifle.

The .35 Whelen cartridge is flexible, allowing handloaders to use bullet weights ranging from 110 to 300 grains. It's a well-balanced cartridge suitable for all types of North American big game. Because .30-06 brass is readily available, handloaders can make cases by simply expanding the case neck of the .30-06 to accept a 35-caliber bullet. Muzzle velocities with 180-grain bullets approach 3,000 fps. Heavier bullets such as 200- and 220- grain slugs generate a muzzle velocity of more than 2,700 fps. Muzzle energy is high with all bullet weights, and with the 300-grain bullet departing at around 2,300 fps, it generates more than 3,500 foot pounds.

Handloading data for the .35 Whelen, especially maximum loads, is basically designed for strong bolt action rifles. I can wrap up the review of the .35 Whelen by saying it is indeed a versatile cartridge. I classify it as one of the truly big game hunting cartridges.

The .348 Winchester is another fairly old cartridge that is filled with romance. Winchester designed it in 1936 specifically for their Model 71 lever action rifle. Here again, we have a conflict between the cartridge and the rifle. I believe any gunsmith will agree that the Model 71 is the epitome of rifle design and beautiful workmanship. I've been known to take a Model 71 apart just to look at the quality machining, possibly a lot of hand filing, too. The .348 cartridge never really caught on, however. One reason could be that America was engaged in a military buildup several years after the cartridge was introduced. By the time thousands of veterans returned from the war, the appeal of lever action rifles was diminishing. Most new recruits in the early 1940s trained with bolt action .30-06 Enfields and Springfields. Also, many foreign ex-military bolt action rifles were brought home and used as big game rifles. A deathblow was nearly delivered to lever action rifles, and only the Model 94 Winchester and 336 Marlin managed to stay afloat. Both slide and lever action rifles could have ridden into the sunset, too, if Remington had not introduced its famous slide action Model 760 Gamemaster in 1952.

Firearm manufacturers in the past tended to shy away from producing slide

action rifles for cartridges such as the .270 Winchester and .30-06, because it was felt that slide action receivers lacked the strength to handle the pressure generated by these powerful cartridges. Remington's Model 760 Gamemaster offered big game hunters a pump action rifle that could be used with most conventional big game cartridges, such as the .300 Savage, .308 Winchester, .270 Winchester and .30-06 to name but a few. There was more than a little skepticism about using some big game cartridges in a slide action, but that was put to rest by the Gamemaster. Its super strong receiver, detachable magazine and fast action make it an ideal choice for Pennsylvania deer hunters. In fact, it is often called the "Pennsylvania deer rifle."

Around 1981 the Model Six (an improved version of the 760) replaced the Model 760. Shortly after the Model Six's debut, Remington brought out the Model 7600, which is still in production.

I've discussed the Remington pump rifle in length but for a reason. Winchester introduced its .308 cartridge in 1952 and its Model 88 lever action rifle in 1955. The .308 is an ideal medium size big game stopper. The Model 88 complete with detachable magazine offered hunters a powerful rifle that was much faster to operate than a bolt. The shooter does not have to remove the hand completely away from the trigger assembly as is the case when operating a bolt action rifle. Admittedly, the Model 88 was far from smooth, and its trigger was horrendous and impossible to adjust, but it added a lot of .30-06 fans to its .308 ranks.

As the suspicions and fears over the Remington pump rifle's safety and accuracy began to wane, the Model 760 Gamemaster instilled new life in the old .30-06 cartridge Although the 760 was chambered for other cartridges, the majority of purchasers opted for the .30-06. Nearly 50 years after the debut of the Model 760, it's still popular with hunters who prefer non-magnum cartridges.

Looking back over the decades, it's obvious that some cartridges and rifle models made a perfect marriage. I suppose it's only fair to start with the Model 94 Winchester and the .30-30 cartridge.

Another combination that held the spotlight for many years was the Remington 141 and the .35 Remington cartridge. The 141 Remington replaced the Model 14 around 1936. The success of the Model 14, which appeared around 1912 in a variety of calibers, was the springboard for the success of the 141. During the gaslight era and into the late 1930s, the slide action Remington chambered for the .35 Remington cartridge was the best big timber hunting combination available.

It wouldn't be fair to overlook the ex-military .30-40 Krag. Sold by the thousands during the Great Depression era for fewer than $15, the uncut .30-40 Krag with its "cellar door" magazine was the poor man's rifle, and that's not being demeaning. During the 1930s money was scarce. Most hunters had little discretionary money to spend on hunting equipment. Even scraping up $10 to $15 (WPA workers made fewer than $50 a month) was a major undertaking. The cumbersome .30-40 Krag put venison on the table during a time when it was needed.

The Model 99 Savage will always be linked with the .300 Savage cartridge. It's true the Model 99 was chambered for other cartridges, but the .300 Savage made the 99, or was it the other way around?

We might be able to give credit to the old trapdoor .45-70 for the appearance of Marlin's current .450 rifle chambering, and certainly the .30-06 cartridge owes its beginning to the Springfields and Enfields. No one knows how many of these ex-military rifles were sporterized, or how many varmint rigs have been built on their actions.

Some of the romance of these old combinations is disappearing, and that's too bad. On the other hand, many of us who recall our successes with some of these rifle/

cartridge combinations are also leaving the scene. I hope that somewhere in the future a gun writer will be talking about the Model 7 Remington and 7mm-08, or the .19 Calhoon (a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber) wildcat that might find a chambering in a strong .22 rimfire action or rebarreled on a .22 Hornet. The .19 Calhoon's extra speed and possibly better ballistic coefficients add an extra 100 yards on top of the Hornet's effective field range.

The romance of guns and cartridges is made by hunters and is the result of a long association. It's a personal thing that is nurtured by hundreds of hours of companionship between the hunter and his rifle. An aged hunter fondly handles a scarred .35 Remington pump and recalls with an inward smile the big 9-point on Little Medix Run that he nailed with the third shot. When the buck erupted from a dense thicket, the old .35 went into action and the 200-grain Silvertip cut off a limb as thick as a broom handle and rolled the buck. What a bullet that 200-grain Silvertip was in the .35. These are the memories that give birth to the romance of guns and cartridges. There's no reason to believe the days of romance are over. It's more likely that hunters will develop a new romance with the 7mm-08, .300 Remington Ultra Magnum or .450 Marlin. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Also Known As . . .

Match the wildlife species with its correct nickname. Copy each letter in the space provided at the end of each group and match the species with its nickname.

____	Ruffed grouse	N	Bushytail
____	Woodcock	I	Masked bandit
____	Chipmunk	M	Thunderbird
____	Woodchuck	E	Timberdoodle
____	Raccoon	L	Whistle pig
____	Gray squirrel	R	Chippie
____			Pigeon hawk
____	Mockingbird	H	Tiger of the air
____	Red squirrel	K	Bay lynx
____	River otter	A	Child of the devil
____	Great-horned owl	O	Chickaree
____	Skunk	G	Great pretender
____	Canada goose	S	Clown of furbearers
____	Bobcat	W	Honker
____			Blue darters

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In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

The following states allow dogs to be used to hunt turkeys during the fall: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Hunters in Colorado took 647 bears during the 1999 fall season — up 94 from the 1998 harvest. The state's black bear population is estimated at between 8,000 to 12,000.

Hunting increased by 25 percent on national forest service lands between 1991 and 1996.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 14,891,855 hunting licenses were sold in the U.S. in 1998.

In 1998, U.S. and Canadian hunters bagged an estimated 1.8 million gadwall ducks. Gadwalls now rank third in total harvest behind only mallards and green-winged teal.

In 1986, Georgia resident licensed hunters numbered more than 343,000. Over a 10-year period that figure had dropped to 314,000. In 1996, most hunters were 35 to 50 years old (approximately 40 percent). Few hunters were younger than 25 (less than 10 percent.) Using this age structure information, if factors are not altered, it's predicted that the number of licensed hunters will drop to just more than 288,000 by 2006, just under 220,000 by 2016, and a mere 140,000 by 2026. This reduction can be attributed mostly to poor recruitment of young hunters.

There were 2,923 turkeys taken in West Virginia during the fall 1999 season — up 74 percent from the 1,678 taken in 1998. Randolph County was tops in harvest with 416 birds.

The number of small game hunters in the U.S. between 1991 and 1996 declined nine percent — from 7.6 million to 6.9 million.

Populations of the Ross' goose have soared from 25,000 in the 1950s to more than one million today.

In 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that there were 3.2 million breeding gadwalls across North America, becoming the fourth most numerous duck, exceeded only by mallards, lesser scaup and blue-winged teal.

Alaska and Wyoming have the highest percentage of hunters based on population — 41 percent; Rhode Island, California and Massachusetts have the lowest — 13 percent.

Top 10 states in number of turkeys: Texas, 600,000; Missouri, 450,000; Georgia, 400,000; Alabama, 350,000; Wisconsin, 320,000, Pennsylvania, 300,000; New York, 250,000; Tennessee, 160,000; and Arkansas, 155,000.

Answers: M, E, R, L, I, N; G, O, S, H, A, W, K.
MERLIN; GOSHAWK.

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STAR BARN OWLS, by Barbara Banco, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Rare birds in Pennsylvania, barn owls are found in the more open areas of the state, where they prey upon rats, mice and other small mammals.



Star Barn Owls

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For further information on participating in this program or to buy stamps, write the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or call 888-888-3459.

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M. GIRIO BRUMMETT

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Volume 71 ● No. 8
AUGUST 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial



A Legacy Worth Remembering

IN 1937 the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act became law. Commonly referred to as the Pittman-Robertson Act, for the legislators who sponsored it, this act has played a major role in the restoration of game animals and many other species of wildlife across America.

Briefly, funds for this program, known as P-R Funds, are derived from an 11 percent excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition; a 10 percent tax on handguns, added in 1970; and an 11 percent tax on bows and arrows, added in 1972.

Since the act took effect in 1938, more than $2 billion has been raised and distributed to the states. The amount each state receives is based on the state's size and number of licensed hunters; the taxes from handguns and archery equipment are allocated to each state based on its total population. Pennsylvania, despite its small size, is one of the top five recipients every year, because we have so many hunters. For fiscal year 2000, Pennsylvania was the third highest recipient, behind Texas and Alaska.

By law, P-R Funds may be used only for wildlife restoration purposes, not law enforcement or public relations, for example. Up to half the funds received from the handgun and archery taxes may be used for hunter education and the construction and maintenance of public shooting ranges. To be funded, projects must be approved by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. States then are reimbursed for up to 75 percent of the costs.

P-R Funds have long been important to the Game Commission. Since 1938, the Game Commission has received more than $144 million, and over the past decade, we've been receiving almost $7 million a year. With P-R funds, the agency conducted research projects on deer, turkeys, woodcock, grouse and other game animals. These funds have been used for land acquisition, and for a short time, hunter education. In recent years, the Game Commission has used P-R Funds to conduct habitat management projects on state game lands and Farm-Game projects.

Despite all that's been accomplished through the Pittman-Robertson Act, a recent survey conducted for the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies suggests that most sportsmen — up to 90 percent — don't know about this tax. The good news, though, is that once they do learn about it, they fully support it.

In the coming weeks and months, when you stock up on ammunition or perhaps even buy a new gun or bow, take pride in the fact that a significant percentage of your purchase is going towards maintaining the future of our outdoor heritage. And while afield during the upcoming hunting seasons, take a moment to reflect on the fact that the outstanding hunting opportunities we enjoy today is a tribute to the sportsmen, legislators and manufacturers who lobbied hard to get the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act passed some 63 years ago. It's a legacy worth celebrating.

For more information or a copy of the report, contact the IAFWA, 444 North Capitol St., NW, Suite 544, Washington D.C. 20001, or visit www.restorewildlife.org — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I am 70 years old and have been hunting since I was 15. When I heard about the early 3-day muzzleloader season in October, I was thrilled; no more hunting in 10-degree weather. But then I learned I needed an antlerless deer permit for the county where I want to hunt. Every year since they began selling them, I've been applying for an antlerless license for the county where I hunt, and I've received a total of one.

Thanks for nothing.

W.L. Kehley,
Bethlehem

With supply greatly exceeding demand in recent years, there can be no more than a few counties where a hunter could go so long without obtaining an antlerless deer license. I can appreciate how frustrating it must be, but on the other hand, licenses are available in just about every county. Why not try hunting a new area.

Editor:

A *Game News* reader for 30 years, I wonder why you have harvest maps for deer and bear, but not for turkeys.

D. Bona,
Manchester, MD

A turkey harvest map is not made and published because our data, based on report cards, is not as precise as it is for bear and deer. For bear, we have mandatory check stations and physically examine virtually every bear taken. For deer, county harvest figures are based on report cards cross-checked with information collected by 30 teams of biologists and other wildlife specialists from more than 40,000 deer at several hundred deer processors across the state.

Editor:

On page 34 of the June issue, the antlerless season is listed as being November 27 to December 9, and then later on it's listed as December 9 to 12. Which is it?

J. Fasano

Sorry for the confusion. If you look carefully, you'll see that the November 27 to December 9 season for antlerless deer is only for Junior and Senior license holders, and for people with a Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle).

The traditional, December 9-12 season is for all hunters. Of course, to take an antlerless deer, a person needs a valid antlerless deer license.

Editor:

In the June issue, Linda Steiner states that she has "Modern Maturity" coming into her home. That magazine is published by AARP, one of the largest anti-gun groups in the U.S. For that reason, my wife and I dropped our membership years ago.

H. Shirk,
Stevens

Editor:

Just renewed my subscription. *Game News* has been like a close member of the family. We've been together since the 1940s, and each issue is like sitting around the table, listening to the hunting yarns and tales with my grandad, uncles and my dad again.

Many thanks.

D. Wells,
Tulsa, OK

Editor:

From a much grateful grandfather to those responsible for keeping the bar high in regards to Sunday hunting, thanks again for maintaining a high moral standard. This is truly an encouragement to my faith in the Game Commission.

A. Bobb,
Woodward

Editor:

My *Game News* subscription gives me hours of great reading enjoyment. I really enjoy the honest confessions in "Field Notes," and I would like to congratulate Nick Rosato for his humorous cartoons.

R. Bender,
Beaver Springs

Correction

In the June "News" section about 25-Year-Club members, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Anthony Austin's name was misspelled. We apologize for the mistake.

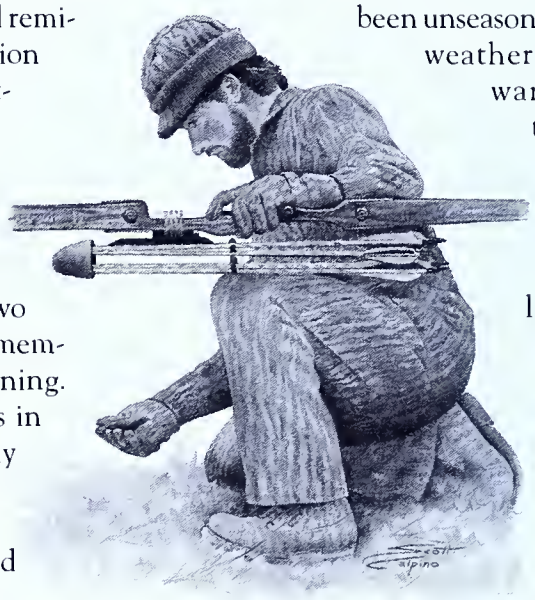
Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

The Second Day of Camp

By Larry L. Harshbarger

NEW YEAR'S DAY and the Super Bowl had come and gone, and our annual archery banquet was just around the corner, so I had to get busy and put together a video of our previous season at camp.

For the past 33 years, members of our bowhunting group, along with our wives and children, have gathered at local restaurants for an evening of dining, visiting and reminiscing. My contribution to these annual outings has always been to create a video highlighting the events of the previous year. The video accomplishes two things: It helps us remember and it's entertaining. With those two goals in mind, I connected my video camera to the VCR and started reviewing what I had from the past season.



The video soon transported me back to the last week of archery season, when we hunted from the Fred Zerby camp in Centre County. As I watched the events unfold on the screen, I couldn't help but remember how badly the week had begun.

My good friend Pete Barr and I had decided to go to camp on Friday — a day earlier than the rest of the group — to do some turkey hunting. Pete had already filled his deer tags, taking a plump doe and a nice spike during the first weeks of the season. Although I had taken a 4-point, I still had a doe tag to fill, but we planned to concentrate on turkeys.

As Pete and I drove across the Seven Mountains, rain began to pelt our windshields. A cold front was moving in from the west, as the past several days had been unseasonably warm, and the weather forecasters were warning of severe thunderstorms for our area.

It was pouring by the time Pete and I unloaded all of our gear at camp and then stood on the large front porch. While sipping coffee we watched the fields below camp as the weather continued to change. Before long the rain slackened and the sky brightened, and we thought we might be able to do some hunting. Suddenly, however, it got extremely still, and then large black clouds rolled in. Exchanging anxious glances, Pete and I commented on how eerie it seemed.

No sooner had we mentioned the calm than the wind kicked up, and we heard thunder far off to the west. As it got closer

and louder, Pete fumed and said, "Sounds like a freight train coming."

"Good night," I said. "That's what people being interviewed on TV say when a tornado hits." Seconds later, the roar of that "freight train" got closer and tree limbs started crashing down around us, sending Pete and me on a quick retreat indoors.

We later learned that a tornado did hit the area. Fortunately for us, it touched down about a mile across the valley, leaving flattened barns, uprooted trees and downed electrical lines in its wake. We were without power at camp for 24 hours.

It rained hard off and on into the night and, because of the weather, Pete and I didn't go turkey hunting the next day. By late evening the other hunters arrived, bringing our total roster to 10. The fireplace and candles provided our only light, so we turned in early; our wake-up time of 4:30 would arrive soon enough.

Still raining the next morning, most of the hunters lingered around camp until it was light enough to see before heading out for turkeys. The two exceptions were Tom Smith and his young son, Aaron, who left early with their bows.

The youngest member of our gang, 14-year-old Aaron, took a nice doe that day. It was his first year of bowhunting, and we were all happy for him, especially his dad.

Later in the day Harold Auman called in and shot a turkey. So although the weather had dealt us a lemon, we still got camp week off to a good start.

Sunday is a day of rest at the Zerby Camp, a time for visiting and sharing stories from the past. As my video was now showing, it's also a time for practicing with the bow. There we were, setting up the 3-D deer target in the woods behind camp and doing some shooting. Target shooting is an important part of our preparation, and each member comes to camp fairly proficient with a bow.

On Monday, we were all up and ready to go, and once again, a few of us took shotguns and went after turkeys, but most of the group took bows and went for deer. The cold front was now well entrenched in our area, giving us calm and clear but extremely cold weather. The bowhunters were out the door by 5:30, a good hour before first light, while the handful of



turkey hunters, which included me, left sometime later. The plan was for everyone to hunt until noon and then return to camp for lunch.

Shotgun across my lap, I sat at the base of a huge hemlock for about three hours. Every so often I made some calls, but the cold made it necessary to move. As I worked my way east toward a slight draw, I heard a rustling in the brush behind me. Within seconds I made out the form of a hunter dragging a deer. Knowing that some of our bowhunters were on top of the mountain above me, I took off to intercept him. It was Tim Zerby dragging a spike. After congratulating him and listening to his story, I unloaded my shotgun and helped him get his deer back to camp.

While we were standing around admiring Tim's buck, Tim's brother-in-law, Barry Corl, came in with his own story about arrowing a buck. Barry felt good about his hit, but after following the blood trail a short distance, he gave up and came for help. About an hour later, seven of us went to where Barry had hit the deer. Before long, we picked up the blood trail.

Although I'm colorblind and can't see blood, I still go along and help by standing near the spot where the blood trail begins petering out, so the trackers have a reference point. I'm always amazed at the tracking abilities of my bowhunting friends and this outing was no exception. Having a good blood trail at first, we soon were reduced to searching for a single drop of blood every few feet. Regardless, our group soon found Barry's 4-point buck piled up against a large oak. After congratulating Barry on a job well done, we helped him with the tagging and field-dressing chores. The buck was dragged to a forest road where I met the gang with my truck.



Back at camp we discussed our excellent start. One turkey and a doe the first day, and now two bucks taken during the morning of the second day. "It doesn't get any better than this," one of our members said. As we were to find out, however, it did. Two hunters had yet to return.

While sitting on the front porch and eating lunch, we heard the old Dodge truck we keep at camp chugging along West Road. Our last two bowhunters to report in, David Fultz and John Zerby, were heading in. As the Dodge sputtered to a stop, David and John bailed out and motioned for us to come over. Within minutes, all of us were gathered around the truck, admiring the two does they had brought in. The four deer bagged on that second day represented the best day of bowhunting our group had ever had. After weighing the deer, we moved them to the woods behind camp for a photo and video session.

By the time camp week ended we had

shot three more turkeys and two more deer — a doe and another spike buck. Now, 35 minutes into my video review, I have a good idea of how I'll edit and rearrange the footage. In addition to documenting the game taken, my video covers the many fun things we do. For example, bringing in wood for the fireplace each day has evolved into a rather enjoyable chore.

For many years it was the responsibility of the younger, stronger members to go for wood. Lately, however, we all participate by forming an old fashion bucket brigade from the wood house to the backdoor of camp. We've found that it's much easier to pass a single chunk of wood from one to the other than it is for one person to carry the entire load. You can't imagine the fun and laughter this method evokes.

Many years ago we introduced another change to a long-held tradition. Instead of cutting off the shirttails of those who miss, our camp captain addresses misses with hard, swift kicks to the seat of the pants. Although it's all done in fun and evokes much laughter, it's humiliating when it's you on the receiving end shown on the TV screen.

Each year as I put together this video, I find myself reliving our week at camp and enjoying it all over again. I'm reminded of how fortunate I am to be a part of our bowhunting clan. "McGuffy's" — the name of our group — is a close-knit unit of hunters who enjoy each other's company while pursuing turkeys and deer. Camp week seems to bring out the best in us as we share a common goal in an uncommon setting. As it turned out, despite the weather, our second day at camp in 1997 was our best ever. ☐

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Outdoor Heritage 2000

By Bob D'Angelo
Game News Associate Editor

A SPIN-OFF of the 1998 Governor's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage hosted by Governor Tom Ridge, Outdoor Heritage 2000 held at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds on May 5 and 6 was a resounding success.





The event was a celebration of the various prominent elements — including hunting and trapping, fishing, mining, farming and the steel industries — that helped shape the culture of the 18 counties that make up Pennsylvania's southcentral and southwestern regions.

OH-2000 was a cooperative project of the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, with the goal to create an event through which a large segment of the public in southcentral and southwestern Pennsylvania could learn the relationship between nature, heritage and community development.

"This is a unique event," said Scott Stuttard of the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation, one of the event's planners. "Outdoor Heritage 2000 showcases the cultural heritage and natural resources of a region we call Westsylvania, an area of southwestern and



GAME COMMISSION Southcentral Region Office staff Don Garner and Lloyd Dell played prominent roles in coordinating OH-2000.

southcentral Pennsylvania where we have a strong tradition of outdoor heritage. Farmers, hunters, miners, railroaders, steelworkers and their families made a living here. Today, our work may be different, but we are still connected to the first Westsylvanians through our appreciation of our outdoor heritage."

Between 12,000 and 15,000 people turned out for OH-2000, to view the displays of more than 80 exhibitors, and to take part in a full program of workshops, demonstrations, videos and other presentations.



JIM BRETT, right, the Governor's Sportsmen's Advisor, discusses the OH-2000 event with Paul Hindes, Director of Family Tyes. Family Tyes is a youth mentoring organization based in the Pittsburgh area using fly-fishing for urban kids to gain an outdoor experience.

Game Commission biologists Rawley Cogan, Gary Alt and Mary Jo Casalena were on hand to talk about Pennsylvania's wildlife, particularly elk, white-tailed deer and wild turkeys.





SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL had plenty of visitors at OH-2000, and Mike Pechart and staff, right, of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau handed out milk and cheese to youngsters.

Just some of the other exhibitors included the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Hartslog Heritage Museum, Pennsylvania Fly-Fishing Museum, Windber Coal Heritage Center, Izaak Walton League, Fort Roberdeau, American Crossbow Federation, National Rifle Association Foundation, Bland's Park, Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum, National Park Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Stony Creek Rods, Pennsylvania Bluebird Society, Swigart Antique Auto Museum, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Penn's Cave, Lincoln Caverns, United Bowhunters, Pennsylvania Travel Council, Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation, Old Bedford Village, Rails to Trails of Central Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

The success of OH-2000 created much interest in bringing the event back to Huntingdon or possibly other locations throughout the state.



LOWE'S building supplies donated lumber for several thousand bluebird box kits that were given away to students who attended OH-2000.



THE FAMILY TYES teaches rod building, fly tying, casting and fishing techniques to young adults, with the goal of making a positive influence so that these kids can find a life-long alternative to drugs, alcohol and other negative challenges in life. Representatives from left to right: Jack Bogut, Executive Council Member; Evan Schoss; Laura Tatko; Matt Rabbitt; Will Trimbath; Vince Giannetti; Mike Virgin; Janine Smith; and Director Paul Hindes.



THE GAME COMMISSION, with many displays and a variety of seminars and programs, was well represented at OH-2000. Bradford County WCO Bill Bower in a 1930s circa uniform displays some hunting and other outdoor memorabilia.



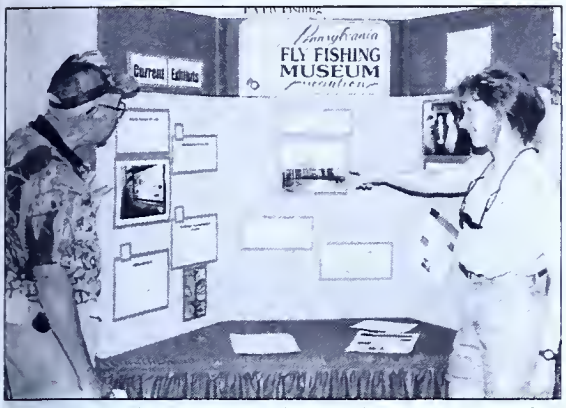
GOVERNOR'S Sportsmen's Advisory Council member Charlotte "Chotty" Sprenkle addresses the Youth Sportsmen's Advisory Council.



SUSQUEHANNA RIVER Waterfowlers Association's Bill DeGeorge, left, and Tommy Cutshall, right, kept visiting kids entertained by demonstrating the mechanics of blowing duck and goose calls. The organization does much to create and preserve waterfowl habitat.



VISITORS certainly didn't go hungry, as a variety of ethnic and traditional foods was available.



JODI REESE, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fly Fishing Museum Association, explains to John Plowman the organization's mission to preserve and share America's fly-fishing heritage and the role of Pennsylvanians in this tradition.



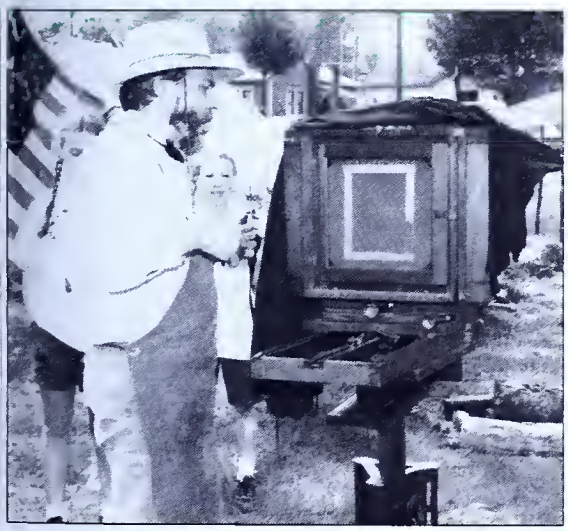
TOM WHITTLE, above, demonstrates making bamboo fly rods. Smaller children, below, enjoyed the petting zoo.





BERETTA USA'S Jay Pitassi, left, Dan Sisciliano, right, and Joe Carles, back, were on hand to give kids shooting instructions.

Photos by author and John Plowman





CIVIL WAR cavalry soldier, above, and photographer George Anthony, left, with his authentic 1860s era camera, put on living history demonstrations.

Kids weren't the only ones taking advantage of the day off from school . . .

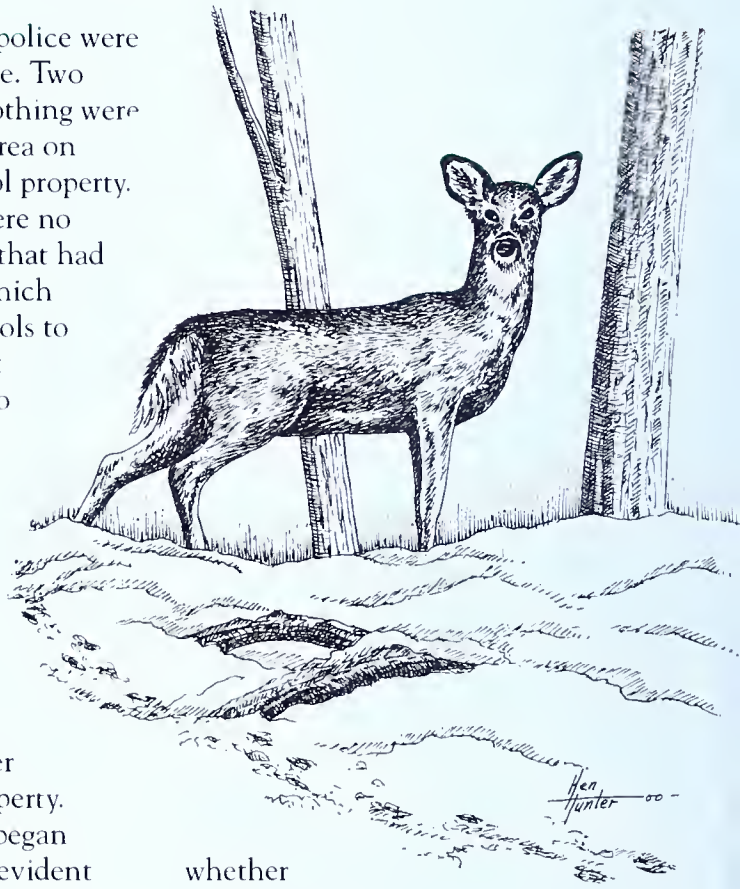
Snow Days

By Terry D. Wills
Lycoming County WCO

IT WAS a call the city police were not equipped to handle. Two hunters wearing white clothing were trespassing in a wooded area on Williamsport High School property. The officers' low shoes were no match for the deep snow that had fallen the night before, which had caused the local schools to close for the day. In street shoes, they were unable to follow the tracks left by the trespassers.

I arrived on the scene an hour later. The late archery/muzzleloader deer season was in, so I surmised that the guys were probably interested in the large unhunted deer population on school property. The light was fading as I began tracking. It soon became evident that these guys were no amateurs, because their track routes indicated a well orchestrated 2-man drive designed to push deer towards one another as they slowly made their way through the thick understory.

Several hours later, well after dark, I found myself at the door of a residence where the tracks ended. With no signs of a kill along their route, I was interested only in the identity of the trespassers, and whether or not they were actually hunting.



At the door I was greeted by an older man and woman. Uncooperative, they claimed to have no idea who had made the tracks leading to their doorstep. No one else living in the area saw or heard anything. Case closed.

Almost exactly one year later, on a cold, snowy day in January, I received a call from a woman who had heard a gunshot and saw a deer drop near her

house. While driving to the residence I wondered if it was the same guys from the year before. Standing across from the very hillside where I had tracked the individuals the year before, the woman explained that she heard a small caliber gunshot across the road, and when she looked over, she saw a deer drop. That was it. No cars or hunters were seen before or after the shot.

I quickly headed up into the woods across the road and onto the school property, where I found the injured deer, wounded but unapproachable. I took photos and blood samples and back-tracked to where the deer had been shot, where I found a spent .22 Magnum case.

Figuring the perpetrator couldn't be too far away, I started out at a steady trot. Daylight slowly turned to darkness, and a cold rain began to fall as I continued along the path of the suspect. The tracks eventually met up with the prints of another person. The trail of the two zigzagged through the thicket, then looped back across the road and led to the same house I had been at the year before.

Tired and soaked to the skin, I didn't have quite the patience I had the preceding year. I identified myself and demanded to know where the gun was and who it was that had just entered the house. Again, I was met with blank stares and no answers to my questions. From where I was standing in the doorway of the kitchen, no guns or wet clothes were visible. I asked the elderly man where he had been, although he was obviously too frail to have been out hunting on the school ground property. The woman of the house became irate because of my rigid, repeated questions. I could tell this was going nowhere, so I left.

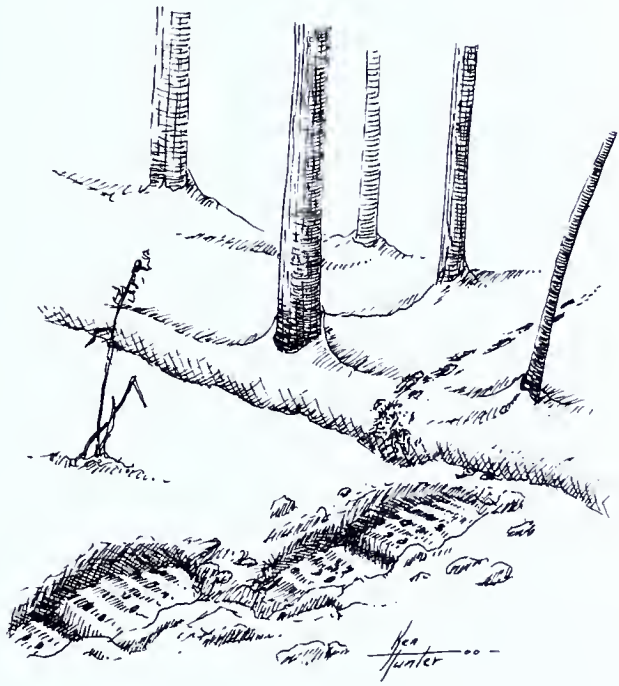
At that point, I began a thorough door-to-door search for answers or a tip that might lead me to the poachers. Finally, residents down the road provided the name of a hunter who often wore white clothing when there was snow on the ground and frequented the area. His name was Ronald Bent, and he lived in town.

When I arrived at Ron's residence he invited me in with a handshake and a smile. The first thing I noticed was a pair of wet boots drying by the woodstove. A quick check revealed the same type of tread pattern I had just spent hours staring at in the snow. I asked Mr. Bent where he had been. "I've been home sick all day," he said.

"Anyone else with you today?" I asked.

"Just my boy. He was off school because of the snowstorm," he said. A box of .22 Magnum ammunition rested in an empty slot in a gun cabinet.

"Where's the rifle that goes with that box of ammo?" I asked.



"Oh, I sold that gun several weeks ago to a guy in Montgomery," he replied.

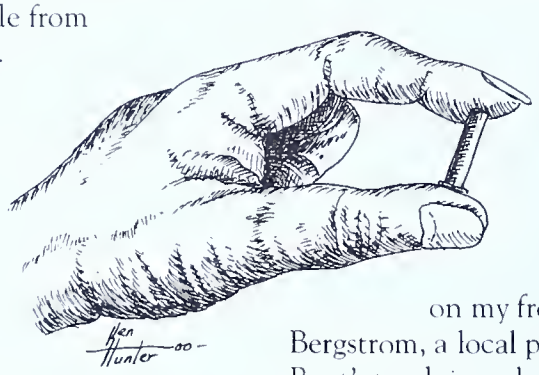
"What's his name?" I asked.

"Joey Farr," he answered. "You want his phone number?"

"No, thanks, but do you know where he lives?" I asked. After a few more questions Ron consented to me taking the boots and ammo, and I headed for Montgomery.

Mr. Farr acted nervous from the start. "I understand you bought a .22 Magnum rifle from Ron Bent," I said.

"Yes sir," he said. "But I sold it about a week ago, and I don't know the man's name who bought it."



My next stop was to talk with Ron's son, who was at his grandparents' home. The boy's arrogant, disrespectful manner was a stark contrast from the other suspects. He told me that he had been shoveling snow at his dad's all day and hadn't been out hunting at all. He knew about his dad's illness and the fact that the gun had been sold a couple weeks earlier. A look at his footwear revealed that they had made the other set of tracks I had followed earlier, so I got his boots, too.

By the time I returned to the scene to take photos and castings of the footprints in the snow, however, warming temperatures and rain had all but destroyed what evidence was there. I was left with little more than a long list of suspicious circumstances, certainly not enough to convince a judge. I held onto the boots a couple more days and attempted to interview the suspects again, but they wanted nothing more to do with me. It turned out that the house where the tracks had led me was Ron's mother's house, but they, too, continued their tight-lipped routine. It was with a heavy sigh of disgust that I returned Ron's and his son's boots. Mr. Bent's strong handshake and smirk added insult to injury as I left his residence that day.

Two years passed, and during the winter hunting seasons my deputies and I kept a close eye on the Bents and the high school property. I was beginning to think they had given up on the spot, but on the second week of January, three years after the poaching incident, I received a knock on my front door. It was Dave Bergstrom, a local police officer. "Ron Bent's truck is parked over at the high school practice field," Dave said. "We thought you'd like to know."

I quickly donned a pair of insulated overalls, gun belt and badge and was out the door. On my way to the school I realized that the kids were off because of another snow day. I radioed deputies Ken McDermott and Jim Neylon, telling them that I would park opposite the practice field on another road, and that I was going to make my way into the wooded section on foot, hoping to avoid being spotted by anyone hunting in the area.

Ken and Jim went to the parked vehicle, where they immediately noticed Dean Bent, Ron's brother, returning to the truck, wearing white coveralls and carrying a bow. Dean told the officers that he had been out bowhunting, alone, and that he was using Ron's truck because he had borrowed it from Ron to get firewood.

In the meantime, as soon as I entered school property, I cut a set of fresh

footprints. I also discovered, though, that my radio battery was dead, so I had no idea what was transpiring with the deputies. The tracks led me towards the general direction of the parked truck, approximately a half-mile away. *Pow*!

The sharp crack of a small caliber rifle broke the silence. I inched my way forward, towards where I heard the shot, still following the fresh boot prints in the deep snow. The tracks veered left and away from where the shot had been, and then they stopped and turned right, up and over a dead tree limb and through heavy cover. Back out into the open I strained to see movement or a human shape. A few more yards I crept, focusing and refocusing my eyes, expecting to see the form of a hunter crouching over a downed deer.

All at once I was startled by the muzzle of a rifle barrel sticking out from behind a tree right in front of me. "State officer, step out from behind the tree!" I yelled. After no response, I commanded again, and then an individual wearing white hunting clothes stepped out and faced me. It was Ron Bent with his trusty .22 Magnum.

Ron said he was target shooting, at a patch of snow on the side of a tree some distance away, because he had bumped his scope and wanted to see if it was still on. Inspection of the tree 84 feet away turned up no bullet holes. He reasoned that his sights must be way off. He also said that he had walked up from his mom's house and that he had permission from the landowner, Bill Giver, to be there. I took his rifle and escorted him to his truck, which he acted surprised to see. En route to his vehicle we crossed fresh tracks of running deer.

At the Bent vehicle, where the deputies were waiting anxiously, I got my opportunity to interrogate Dean, who already showed signs of not wanting to cooperate. "Ron tells me you dropped him off earlier," I asked, hoping the gamble would pay off.

"Yea," Dean said.

It turns out Ron had picked Dean up earlier. The plan was for Dean to take the wheel and drop off Ron and then go park the truck on the school property. From there Dean planned to hunt with his bow.

This is what they did. The only part Dean left out was that Ron, using the rifle, would attempt to kill a deer that Dean would then tag as his archery kill. "I just assumed he was using the .22 to hunt squirrels," Dean remarked.

After allowing both men to leave, minus Ron's rifle and white hunting overalls as evidence, WCO Tom Smith, Ken, Jim and I returned to where I had noticed the deer tracks. A light snow began to fall and darkness was setting in as we searched the area for evidence. After tracking for a while, I noticed blood in the prints of one of the deer that had passed by Ron's position. Desperately needing a bullet to match to the gun, Ken and I spent the next two hours following the trail through brush on and off the property. We jumped the deer several times as it eventually made its way back to the area where it had been shot. It eventually became evident that this deer was not hurt bad, and around 8 o'clock, totally exhausted and flashlights failing, we gave up the track to return the following morning.

The next day was clear and cold with a couple inches of fresh snow obscuring the tracks. Just enough red showed through the fresh coating to enable us to follow the injured deer. Jumping it again, it was obvious that we had no chance of recovering the deer and bullet; the bullet probably penetrated deep muscle in the thigh area or merely nicked flesh and

exited. Pushing the deer any farther would be futile. It would be up to a judge to decide, based on the evidence we had, whether Ron Bent had intentionally inflicted this wound.

That evening Bill Giver denied ever giving Ron Bent permission to do any target shooting on his property, and confirmed that the shooting did occur on the high school property. I thanked him for his time and advised him that he may have to testify at a hearing.

My next order of business was to test the rifle to determine whether the sights were adjusted so that Ron could have hit the tree he said he was shooting at. I fired three, 3-shot groups, at 75, 100 and 225 feet, and found the small 1-inch groups to be a hair high. Clearly he should have been able to hit the patch of snow on a tree 84 feet away, if that is what he was really shooting at. I finally felt that I had all the evidence I would need to charge Mr. Bent for attempting to unlawfully kill a deer.

In preparation for the hearing I served two subpoenas. One for Mr. Giver and the other for Dean Bent, who I needed to testify in order to prove that Ron had lied to me when I apprehended him. This became my greatest obstacle of all. Repeated efforts to serve Dean soon revealed that he wanted nothing to do with showing up for a trial in which his brother was being accused of a game law violation. I tried just about everything to find Dean. I staked out his apartment and Ron's house morning and evening. I stopped at odd times, in unmarked cars. I used deputies in and out of uniform.

Dean was unemployed, so going to a work place wasn't an option. As the hearing date drew near I started to worry, but then one cold February morning Dean's roommate answered the phone. From my hidden position out back in the ally, where I had a clear view of Dean's car, I called on my wife's cell phone.

"Just a minute, I'll get him," came the reply.

With the final subpoena served, I breathed a big sigh of relief.

At the District Justice hearing I testified to all of the incriminating circumstances, including the shot, the missed tree, clothing, deer tracks, blood, false statements, etc. Dean couldn't remember much of anything, and Mr. Giver never showed up. The defense attorney argued and objected to no avail, and Ron was found guilty and sentenced to pay a $500 fine.

Not one to give up, Ron appealed to County Court, at which point the case was out of my hands. At the appeal, the lawyers battled out a plea arrangement whereby Ron pleaded guilty to using an unlawful device to hunt deer. He was fined $100 and has a good chance of losing his hunting privileges for a time. Ronald Bent's admission in court ended a 4-year saga. After court, Ron came up to me. "I learned my lesson," he said. "You won't have to worry about me hunting up there anymore."

It was bittersweet for my deputies and me. We caught and convicted the poacher I vowed to get three years earlier. At least two deer suffered gunshot wounds and were never recovered, and many hours of patrol and investigation went into this case. The $100 fine just didn't seem like enough, but there wasn't much we could do. I don't know if Ron learned his lesson or not, but one thing is for sure: On "snow days" during late archery/muzzleloader season, I know where I'll be. □



Mongrel Red and the Grouse

By George Edwards

THE MUTT had the nose and ears of a Brittany, the soulful eyes of a beagle, the hair of a Lab, and the tail of a collie. He was rust colored and stood nearly 15 inches at the shoulder. We called him Mongrel Red or just Red. He was a good watchdog and liked to chase rabbits. In fact, he chased almost anything in sight. But when it came to birds, Red was in his element.

Back in the days of prohibition, when I was a maturing hunter, I was given lots of advice from other hunters. Naturally, all were experts and without equal among their peers. However, the best tip I was ever given was from two old-timers who have since gone on to their eternal reward where there is a bunny behind every bush and a grouse in every thicket. The two bits of information they passed on to me were no great secrets among experienced hunters, but the advice was much appreciated by a novice like me. They said that Greene County was hopping with rabbits, and that Somerset County was thick with grouse.

Thanks to Red, my brothers and I were rewarded with limits of cottontails on our frequent trips to Greene County, but the most memorable hunting days with the mongrel were those spent combing the forest in Somerset County for ruffed grouse.

We often left our Westmoreland County home in early morning before the roosters crowed and wouldn't return until after sundown. To reach our favorite grouse covert in Somerset County, we drove miles in an old beat up jalopy on deep rutted dirt roads off the main highway. Our grouse paradise was close to a farm nestled between two mountain ridges that was occupied by a farmer and his family. Grouse were literally all over the place at that time, and it was rare that we didn't put out at least a couple dozen a trip.

In this one particular spot on the farm the grouse were extremely tough to bring down. Unlike those in other places we hunted, these birds flew so erratic when they took off that they were difficult to track with the 16-gauge double. By the time I drew a bead on one and pulled the trigger, the bird would suddenly change direction. It was as if the grouse had built-in radar, and radar wasn't even invented at the time.

Sometimes when Red went on point, we'd flush four or five birds at once, which made picking out one to shoot challenging. Red was a joy to watch when he neared a grouse. His body went stiff as a board, and his tail stood straight up and waved back and forth like a metronome. He would hold until we'd say, "Get 'em, Red," and then he'd flush the bird. We never trained him to do this or anything else; hunting just came natural to him.

Sometimes when we hunted near the farm and approached a certain stand of timber and thickets, a hollow sounding, booming voice warned us away. At times we could make out a low hissing sound, and we'd also get a whiff of burning wood, but never saw any smoke. It was very strange and somewhat frightening, so we kept our distance. There was also a seep in this area, and it ran down the slope for several hundred feet and formed small pools in the low spots.

One day while hunting this area Red was at his best and put up grouse after grouse. We shot a lot of shells at these fast zigzagging speedsters, and we managed to put a few birds in our game pouches. While we paused to eat our sandwiches and give Red a rest, he ran over to one of the pools of water and started to lap. Then he shook his head, made a smacking sound and rolled his tongue around. We thought he must have gotten some debris in his mouth. He went back to lapping until he got his fill, then he sprawled out next to a log and closed his eyes. It seemed like Mongrel was feeling his 10 years.

When we were ready to resume our hunt, we called to Red. He slowly got up and shook his body and then walked around in a circle a couple of times before going completely berserk, running around yelping and tripping over fallen logs. After rolling on the ground he got up and started running around again. Next, he picked up a stick and charged over to us. He ran around wildly, stopped, shook the stick furiously, jumped up and down and then repeated his performance. Red had completely flipped his lid. We thought maybe he had a stroke, because he never acted like this before.

We decided we should head home, but getting Red on a leash and back to the car was no easy task. Once we got him inside, he curled up on the floor in the backseat and immediately went to sleep. When we got back home, Red jumped out of the car and went to his favorite spot on the back porch, where he promptly fell asleep again. In the morning Red was his old self. It was puzzling.

On our next outing to Somerset County we ended up at the same spot where Red had gone crazy. He drank from one of the pools and began exhibiting the strange behavior once again. But this time he ran up the hill into the timber where the boom-

ing voice had warned us away on past hunts. We were close behind. There was no warning voice this time, and we would soon solve several riddles.

In the hardwoods the farmer had built a shack that housed a moonshine still near a cool, clear running spring. Not knowing what to expect, we were somewhat hesitant as we approached this architectural masterpiece. The shack was outfitted with a boiler, tanks, coiled tubing, gauges, valves and barrels of corn mash.

We figured out that after the fermentation process was complete, the farmer carried the spent mash in buckets and scattered it in the woods. It seemed that the grouse took a liking to this residue and fed on it year-round. As a result, when they were flushed and took off, their flight was wildly erratic. That's why trying to hit one of those soused grouse had been such a challenge.

We also discovered the source of the booming voice. The farmer had a 4-inch metal pipe running for some distance from the still to where he got rid of excess liquid from the overflow outlet. We deduced that whenever we approached the still, he shouted into the pipe through a large funnel, which carried his voice to the thicket. The pipe acted like an echo chamber for his voice, which frightened us away. In addition, the farmer used extremely dry hardwood for his fire to minimize smoke that would divulge the location of his still to those who prowled the backwoods looking for such illegal operations.



And Red's weird antics? Well, the water from the seep was contaminated with the excess liquid that the farmer piped away, and its alcoholic content was enough to give Red a good buzz when he drank from the pools. When he picked up the stick, shook it, ran around in circles and jumped up and down, it was merely his way of telling us that there were more grouse around there than you could shake a stick at.

In later years when I returned to Somerset County with my sons, we considered a half-dozen grouse flushes a day as excellent. It wasn't the grouse country I once knew, or maybe it was because there was no one around to scatter food for the birds. At least I like to think that, because the grouse in those later years weren't as hard to hit as those rousted out by Mongrel Red in the old days. □

Cover Painting by Marie Girio Brummett

CHESAPEAKE BAY retrievers exuberate strength and agility. The breed originated in America and was bred to withstand the frigid waters of the Chesapeake Bay. This is a big dog, males average between 65 to 75 pounds, with oily, dense fur and a wooly undercoat. The color varies from dark brown to a faded tan. "Chessies" have a reputation for being bold, stubborn, "one-man" dogs, but they'll get the job done in a waterfowl blind when weather and water conditions get rough.

"Chesapeake Bay Retriever" is limited to 300 signed and numbered prints, image size 9x13 1/2, overall size 13x18. The prints are $65, delivered. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Order from the artist at P.O. Box 7006, York, PA 17404.

Waterfowl Hunting the Inexpensive Way

By James J. Corsetti Jr.

I TOOK up duck hunting about 10 years ago, when I had just gotten out of law school. A couple of my classmates were ardent waterfowlers, and after a few years of cajoling, they finally got me to go. I shouldn't have waited so long.

Growing up I hunted small game and deer in bow season. But as the years went by, my small game take got smaller and smaller. Squirrels, grouse in some years, doves and groundhogs provided the most consistent small game hunting opportunities. Because I enjoy wingshooting more than anything else, and because ducks and resident Canada geese were on the rise, it was a natural to take up waterfowl hunting. I had never tried it before, though, because I didn't know anyone who did it and thought it would be too expensive, because of all the equipment that goes along with it. Thankfully, I was wrong.

Like with anything else, duck hunting can be as expensive as you make it. While it's nice to have all sorts of equipment, most of it is not necessary. Actually, all that's needed for duck hunting is a shotgun capable of handling steel shot, a couple boxes of good quality steel loads — preferably in number 3 or 4 shot sizes for ducks, BBs or 2s for geese — camouflage, and a pair of chest waders, although in many instances hip boots will suffice. Add to that a duck call, goose call and some decoys, and you're all set.

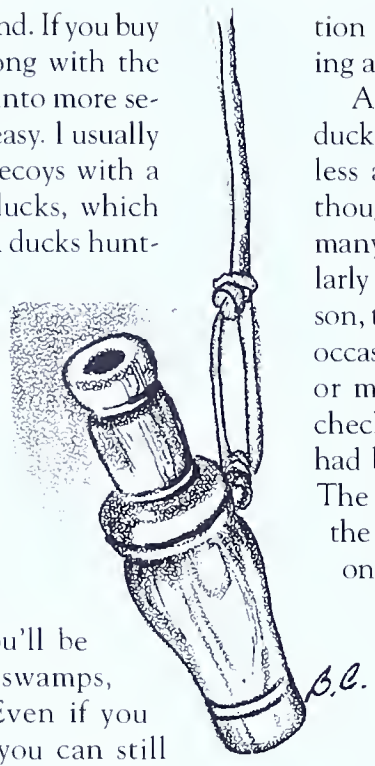
There are many state game lands, state parks and state forests that have bodies of water where hunters can find waterfowl hunting opportunities. Obtaining maps for these public hunting areas is a good start to inexpensive waterfowling. I do most of my waterfowl hunting on game lands in the southeastern part of the state, but I also hunt on public land in the Poconos. The Poconos has abundant swamps, and due to a healthy beaver population, new waterfowl areas are created all the time.

To keep costs down you can purchase suitable camouflage clothes from Army surplus stores cheaper than the specialty stuff ordered from catalogs. If you fish, chances are you have a pair of waders. Most duck calls are inexpensive and, luckily, most ducks respond to a mallard's call, so one call is all you need. While it's nice to have a canine companion such as a Lab, Chessie, or even a water spaniel, it's not necessary. Believe it or not, you can use a fishing rod to retrieve downed birds. With heavy pound test line and a large floating plug, you can reach out and snag a dead bird from almost anywhere you can cast. Make sure you have your fishing license, though. If you encounter a waterways conservation officer, he may not appreciate or understand that you are using the rod for retrieving purposes only. Also, I've caught bass while retrieving game, which added a nice bonus.

Thanks to mail order outlets, you can order a dozen or so inexpensive decoys. While these dekes don't have quite the realistic look of more expensive ones, the


Bob Crain

birds don't seem to mind. If you buy a mesh bag to go along with the dekes, packing them into more secluded areas is fairly easy. I usually use mostly mallard decoys with a sprinkling of wood ducks, which are the most common ducks hunters are likely to encounter, particularly early in the season. Again, mallards attract all species of ducks, so you really don't need anything else to complete your decoy spread.



In many areas you'll be limited to hunting swamps, creeks and ponds. Even if you don't have decoys, you can still hunt these areas. With creeks, as well as some swamps, you can jump shoot ducks. Simply walk along the shore as quietly as possible. When walking along flooded, swampy areas, it's a little more difficult to be quiet, but it can be done. Even when hunting ponds, decoys are not always necessary as long as you know where the birds are entering and leaving the water. That's where a little pre-season scouting can help. By scouting, you can find out what ponds and swamps are being used, and when birds fly into or out of those areas. That way you can position yourself in the best pass shooting areas.

As far as I'm concerned, though, duck hunting isn't duck hunting unless a decoy spread is set out. Although decoys aren't necessary on many of the waters I hunt, particularly on the first day of the early season, they do help. On more than one occasion I've had high flying woodies or mallards come within range to check out my decoys, even after they had been shot at by other hunters. The size of your spread depends on the size of the water. If I'm hunting on a larger pond, I'll use up to two dozen decoys. I either spread them out in small groups or use a "J" pattern to attract them. Having space to land among the decoys is important to circling ducks. Keep your calling to a minimum; calling too much makes ducks suspicious.

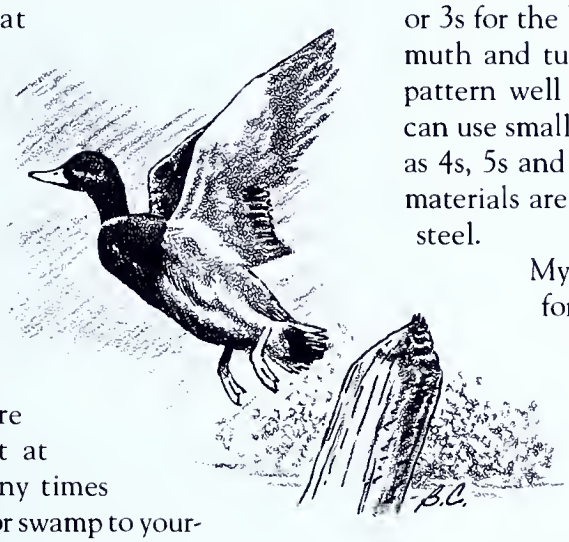
If I'm hunting a small pond or the middle of a swamp with a creek running through it, I keep my decoy spread to a dozen or fewer. On a creek, I find a nice quiet bend and place no more than a half-dozen dekes in an eddy. It's unnatural to have a lot of ducks in a small area, so keep your decoys to a minimum. Set your decoys within 30 yards of your blind, and shoot only at ducks that enter inside the decoys. Even if you can hit what you shoot at (most hunters aren't proficient at shooting at the longer ranges), the chance of crippling birds beyond 30 yards is pretty high.

Pennsylvania usually has a split duck season. In most of the state the early season opens in mid-October and lasts about two weeks, and the second split begins in November and runs through Christmas into early January. I enjoy the early season

Sportsmen's Recreation Maps are available for each state game land tract and are good sources to locate wetlands and swamps that may provide waterfowl hunting opportunities. Maps are $1 and can be ordered from the PGC at Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. For maps of state parks write: PA Bureau of State Parks, P.O. Box 8551, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8551. For maps of state forests write: PA Bureau of Forestry, P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552.

because it's a nice time to be out, and hunters usually get a crack at a greater variety of ducks. The usual species are woodies, mallards and blacks, but sometimes teal are around, too. With the exception of teal, in my opinion, there is no duck more challenging to hit than the wood duck. They can do low level runs at high speed through flooded timber, making even the most experienced shooter look bad. October is usually the only time to get a crack at woodies, because at the first cold spell, or if there is too much hunting pressure, they're gone.

In past years the drawing for goose blind reservations at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area has been in August. This was done to accommodate opening the controlled area for Canada goose hunting during the early resident season in September. The controlled area at Middle Creek will not be open for goose hunting during the September 2000 season, so the Commissioners proposed moving the blind drawing from the second Wednesday in August to the second Wednesday in September, to provide hunters more time to apply and to ensure hunters can review federal waterfowl seasons, which are released in early September, before they apply.



That's the advantage of the second season, however. There are fewer hunters out at that time, and many times you'll have a pond or swamp to yourself. During the second season you'll see mostly mallards and black ducks.

If ice begins to form, you can still attract ducks. Simply break up the ice, remove it, and place your spread in the hole you created. This little trick has worked for me over the years, and it brings the birds directly in front of the blind. During deer season there's usually no one duck hunting, so you can work ducks without worrying about competition or someone skybusting and messing up your setup.

When it comes to shotguns for ducks, the 12-gauge reigns supreme, preferably a repeater. Improved cylinder or modified chokes are best with steel shot, and patterning your gun with a variety of loads will determine which choke and load combination works best. For ducks I prefer 3-inch magnums in number 4 shot for early season and number 2s or 3s for the late season. If bismuth and tungsten-iron loads pattern well in your gun, you can use smaller shot sizes, such as 4s, 5s and 6s, because these materials are more dense than steel.

My favorite shotgun for duck hunting is the Winchester Black Shadow Model. It has a slick, fast action, and because the stock is impervious to the weather, it can take a beating and still perform. I realize that some hunters prefer the 3½-inch magnum shotgun, but for ducks, particularly woodies and teal, it's not necessary. It does have the advantage of placing more pellets in the target area, though, and there are some goose hunting situations where the 3½-inch shotshell might come in handy.

If you want more small game hunting opportunities, try hunting waterfowl. You just might have the best wingshooting action you'll get all season, and you don't have to break the bank the process. □

Try your whitetail deer savvy with this informative quiz.

The Buck Stops Here

By Bryce Hall
Assistant Regional Forester

1. Optimal body weight and antler size does not occur until what age?
   a) 1.5 years b) 3.5 years
   c) 5.5 years d) 8.5 years

2. A spike buck is usually the result of bad genetics and should be harvested from the population.
   a) True b) False

3. The most critical factor influencing the size of a buck's antlers is
   a) genetics b) age
   c) quality food

4. Percentage of the Pennsylvania buck harvest that is 1.5 years old (first set of antlers).
   a) 22% b) 56%
   c) 77% d) 92%

5. Mature bucks are the primary breeders in Pennsylvania.
   a) True b) False

6. A doe can be bred at what age?
   a) 1.5 years b) 2.5 years
   c) 7 months

7. To improve the quality of Pennsylvania's deer herd we should import deer from
   a) Wisconsin b) Georgia
   c) Texas d) none of above

8. One good means of improving the quality of deer on my property is
   a) use high nutrient mineral licks
   b) keep my fields and trees limed and fertilized c) have a restricted doe harvest

9. The number of points on a deer's rack always increase with age.
   a) True b) False

10. Quality Deer Management focuses primarily on
    a) harvest strategies and habitat management b) trophy antler production
    c) producing higher numbers of deer

11. Which habitat can support the healthiest population of deer?
    a) mature mast producing woodland
    b) open farmland
    c) successfully regenerating seedling/sapling growth

12. By deer season, some fawns in Pennsylvania weigh as little as
    a) 56 lbs. b) 72 lbs. c) 42 lbs.

13. Which state harvests a high percentage of young antlered deer, and, as a result, is not well known for producing B&C trophies?

a) Minnesota b) Pennsylvania
c)Kansas

14. The enormously racked buck known as "30/30" that was raised in captivity after his mother was killed on a highway came from what state?
a) Maine b) Texas
c) Pennsylvania

Answers:

1. The correct answer is c) 5.5 years old.

Nearly all of those 1.5 year old bucks we are harvesting in Pennsylvania have achieved only 10% of the total antler mass they are capable of producing at maturity.

There are dramatic changes in antler size until approximately 5 or 6 years of age. Contrary to popular belief, some bucks do show antler decline later in life, but this may not occur until age 9.5 or older.

That old, gray looking 6-point your buddy shot was not an old deer going downhill. Many Pennsylvania hunters have never seen a fully mature whitetail buck weighing close to 200 lbs.

Pennsylvania is known as a "Deer Factory State," not a deer quality state. Many Pennsylvania hunters want to see a lot of deer and typically shoot the first buck that appears. More emphasis and education concerning quality deer management could change this.

2. This is definitely b) false.

There is little relationship between a buck's antler as a yearling and his antler growth potential later in life. At many research centers and deer farms, spike bucks have developed into world class whitetails.

The birth date of a buck is the primary influence on his first set of antlers. The later in the spring or summer a deer is born the more his body will require the nutrients he consumes to be put into body growth instead of antler growth. This deer will normally catch up to deer born earlier by the time he is 2 or 3 years old.

3. The correct answer is b) age.

This was a hard one. All three factors influence a buck's antler potential. The second most critical factor is quality food. Genetics has some bearing but not as much as was once assumed. You can compare it to thoroughbred breeding in racehorses. Even with the genetically superior horses being bred, it may take thousands of breedings to create a champion.

4. The correct answer is c) 77 percent.

Most of the bucks harvested in Pennsylvania are sporting their first set



AGE is the most critical factor in producing quality antlers. Dan Graham, 12, from Butler County took this 9-point on the second day of the 1999 season.



APPROXIMATELY 77 percent of the bucks harvested annually in Pennsylvania are 1.5 years old. To get a crack at big bucks, like Jeff Luvison's 10-point, left, or Ed Diethrick's 12-point, right, both taken in Sugar Grove Township, Warren County, hunters must pass up immature bucks.

of antlers, at 1.5 years old. They are still four years away from their full potential. Do you harvest a buck almost every year? To increase the quality and age of bucks in your hunting area, try harvesting a big doe for your freezer and let that immature buck walk. If your buddies do the same, you should notice improvements in the quality of bucks in your area within several years. Other hunters will probably harvest some of the deer you let go that same season, though. This is a fact you have to accept in order to improve the deer herd in your area.

5. The answer is b) false.

Very few bucks reach full maturity in Pennsylvania. This leaves the 1.5 and 2.5 year old bucks to do the majority of the breeding, and this can be a stress on these immature deer, which further impacts their antler growth.

6. Interestingly, the answer is c) 7 months.

Some fawns reaching a weight of 70 pounds or more by the fall breeding season can be bred. Typically they have only one fawn the following spring and it is born later in the spring or summer. Our mature forested habitat in northcentral Pennsylvania supporting a fairly high number of deer probably limits many fawns from reaching a body weight high enough for breeding by fall.

7. The answer is d) none of the above.

While all three states harbor some impressive habitat and bucks, there is no research that suggests adding a few animals could improve an established herd. Pennsylvania was previously stocked with deer from at least seven different states. We only need to let some of our deer reach maturity in order to see the true potential they have.

8. Another tough one. The answer is b) keep my fields and trees fertilized.

The nutrients from the grasses, field crops, or shrubs and mast trees that have been fertilized are transferred directly into the deer that feed on them. The results are healthier deer and improved growth, assuming the population is not too high to begin with.

Deer rarely use high nutrient mineral blocks commonly sold for cattle use. Deer will use straight salt blocks or mineral blocks with 70 percent or more salt content. The benefits from minerals in this form are still under study.

Unless you already have an over wintering deer population that is less than your land's carrying capacity, restricting the doe harvest will result in increased numbers of

lower quality deer, possibly reduce your buck/doe ratio, and put more stress on the entire deer herd.

9. The answer is b) false.

While some bucks do have more points on their racks as they get older, this doesn't hold true for all deer. Some deer grow 6-, 8- or even 10-point racks for their first antlers and then never increase the number.

tioned to think this is good deer habitat. Unfortunately, with the exception of good mast producing years, there is little to eat in a sawtimber-size stand of timber with fern for ground cover. Woodlands such as these don't offer much in the way of escape cover.

12. The answer is a lightweight c) 42 lbs.

First Days for Antlerless Application

By Mail		
Antlerless License (residents)	August	7
Antlerless License (nonresidents)	August	21
Private Land Antlerless License, where available	August	28
Over-the-Counter		
Regular Antlerless License, Special Regs. Areas	August	28
Regular and Private Land Antlerless License, where available	Nov.	6

The pedicel and beam girth, along with the spread and beam length of each antler, normally increase up to age five or older.

10. The answer is a) harvest strategies and habitat management.

Many people believe the premise behind quality deer management is simply to produce more trophy bucks to hunt. The true focus of quality deer management is to improve habitat and use proper biological antlered and antlerless harvests in order to achieve a healthy deer herd in balance with the environment.

11. The answer will slap you in the face c) successfully regenerating seedling/sapling growth.

Successfully regenerating are the key words in this answer. On many forested lands, particularly in Northcentral Pennsylvania, it is difficult to regenerate a forest to seedling/sapling stage timber because of the heavy deer browsing pressure. Fencing seems to work well, but it is expensive.

Many hunters have grown up hunting open mature woodlands and are condi-

Some fawns we have encountered while aging deer in northcentral Pennsylvania have been extremely small. They may have been born late in the summer or were from an area with high deer densities and insufficient habitat to provide good nutrition — or both.

At the processor, you pay the same price for cutting a small deer as the hunter with the 130-pound animal.

13. The state not well known for Boone and Crockett trophies b) Pennsylvania.

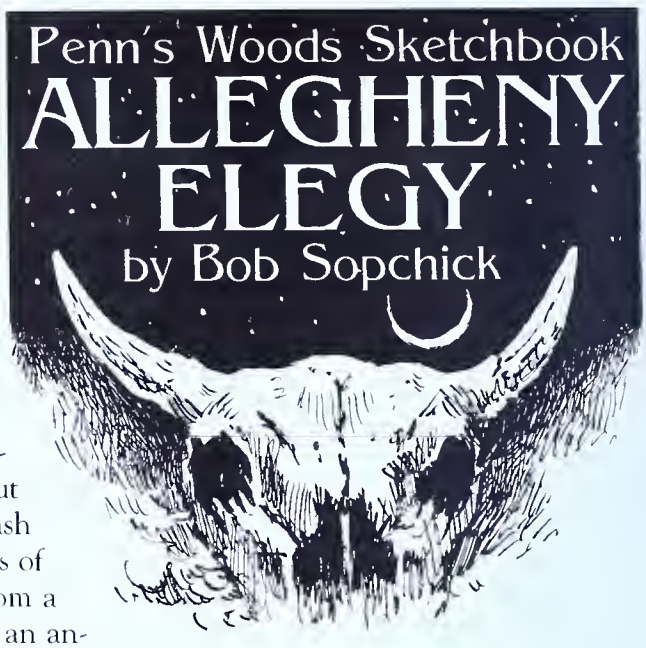
14. "30/30" hailed from c) Pennsylvania

This seems to not fit with the last answer. He grew into one of the largest antlered whitetail bucks in the world. This buck was orphaned when a car struck his mother. No special genetic breeding here. Just a Pennsylvania buck that had optimum feed and achieved his record rack by living to maturity. □

Penn's Woods Sketchbook

ALLEGHENY ELEGY

by Bob Sopchick



A STEER SKULL, half-buried in oak leaves, stares out from the mountain hollow into the broad valley and far beyond, into the black void of a cold and clear November sky. The skull sparkles with an impasto of frost that captures torrents of stars. Cradled in the sweep of its horns is a horned moon, an arc within an arc, as in the way the bow of the valley holds the higher curve of the hollow. Throughout the night, meteors criss-cross above the Allegheny Plateau, but no eyes are poised to watch them flash and die, save those unseeing sockets of the skull. Like a boulder carried from a distant landscape and deposited by an ancient sheet of retreating ice, the skull is an erratic, a remnant from the tendril of civilization that has crept up the valley floor from the advancing sheet of populations beyond.

On top of the mountain a shadowy mass ushers silently out of a rhododendron thicket, fractures into smaller shadows as it slips down through the piebald birches, then reassembles again in the hollow as the complete and immense silhouette of a bear.

The bear stops and sniffs the skull. He hooks a single claw into the eye socket and presses down, loosing it from the earth. A tenant mouse leaps from its nest in the brain cavity and is quickly snuffled up and swallowed by the bear. The bear steps over the skull and continues down into the hollow to feast on the flood of acorn mast that fills every cleft and runnel.

The bear feeds for a long time, grinding acorns in his great jaws, as he has nightly for several weeks along this ridgeline. Satiated, he stops gorging, panting heavily, a huge Cheshire grin glistening in the dark. Far below, a dog barks, then a light flicks on in a milk barn. Cows low and shuffle. A vagrant breeze stirs the oak leaf carpet. The bear raises its nose high, drawing the cold air in deeply and is gone before the plume of that same exhaled breath drifts and rises.

The bear, like the constellation Ursa Major, or Great Bear, is a child of the night, moving endlessly through his universe of starlit fields and trackless forests. Now in the autumn of his sixteenth year, and at more than 700 pounds, he has survived in the rumpled mountains of this province not by brute force or terrific power, but as little more than an anonymous shadow slipping through the dense thickets.



In a sense, black bears are born twice; first while January winds howl, and again a few months later when they emerge from the confines of the den

into the dazzling world of spring. And so it is with Ursa, the last of three cubs to leave the secure den.

Ursa lingers momentarily, the familiar odors of the cool den rushing up past his nose, dissipating in mountain air alive with birdsong and strange and compelling aromas. He squats in a beam of sunlight, wide-eyed, every sense overloaded, then scrambles along in the shadow of his mother and into the deeper shadows of a hemlock glade and the rest of his life.

The cubs quickly learn that in nature's vast storehouse almost anything is edible, and some things especially so. They also learn that in those fringes where civilization meets wilderness special treats can be found. They experience the glut of a midsummer night in a patch of sweet corn, and the easy pickings of apple trees weighed down with fruit. They congregate with other bears at a local dump, gleaning the putrid refuse. One night the dump is flooded with lights as flashbulbs pop. A man takes pictures from the roof of his 1936 Ford while his wife coos at the cubs from inside the coupe.

But danger abounds in the tenuous tract where man meets beast. Once, they were chased and treed by large, fierce dogs. At another farm, shotgun blasts rocked the still night air as they were driven from a corncrib. Ursa learns that man is to be avoided, and they hide in the thickest cover in remote places while hunters put on noisy drives and rifle shots echo through the hills.



In his third year Ursa ranges far into new territory. While plodding through a broad marsh between a highway and a rail line, the exquisite bouquet of rank meat pulls him through the cattails as if on a leash. He follows his nose to the perimeter of an opening flooded by light.

The light illuminates the stockyard of a small slaughterhouse that belongs to a butcher called The Swede. Swede's shop is on the edge of a tiny village, and at the close of evening hours his three pigtailed and rosy-cheeked daughters come to the stall in the back of the shop to watch their father feed meat scraps to bears that come out of the marsh. Cued by his banging with a cleaver on corrugated tin, the bears enter the stockyard nervously, quickly gobbling the scraps that he lobs at them. Suddenly, these lesser bears bolt from the yard as an enormous boar ambles into the circle of light. The butcher's daughters plead, "Make him dance, Papa, make him dance!"

The Swede stands on the rung of a stock gate and waves his arms back and forth, like a metronome. The big bear sits up and begins to sway, following the arc of the meat scrap. The little girls clap in time and the boar, king of the uplands, is reduced to the lowly status of court jester.

Several days later Ursa becomes part of the opening act and even drives off a smaller bear, but gives the big boar a wide berth when he makes his grand entrance. The Swede invites several neighbors to come over for the show.

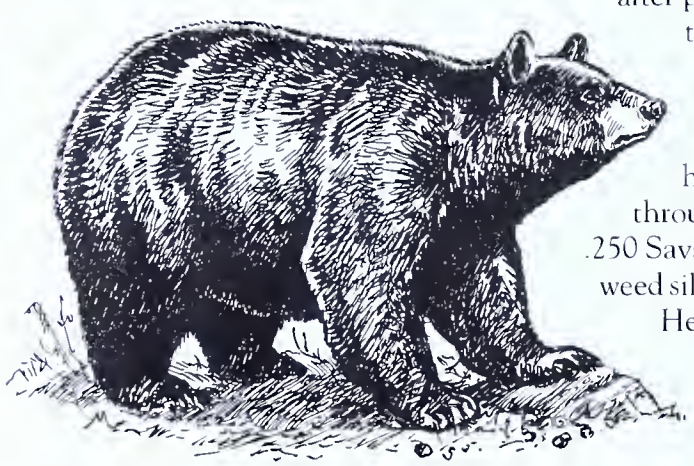
In the middle of the performance the big boar stops, and in a lightning fast charge crashes headlong into the stock gate where The Swede is perched with his daughters, sending them sprawling into the mire. Screaming, they scamble into the shop and bolt the door as the bear eats the spilled platter of meat scraps. Mama Swede, holding her whimpering daughters, firmly tells her still trembling husband that the show is over for good.

Ursa, ever cautious and fearful of the big boar, pads silently up to a flatbed truck parked on the side of the slaughterhouse. A steer head lays on the tailgate. Ursa grabs it by an ear and takes off, fearing the big boar is after him. He splashes through the marsh, fords a creek and lopes high into the uplands. He stops in a mountain hollow with his treasure, deftly peeling a meager meal from the steer head, then covers the remains with leaves.

The years pass and summer finds Ursa in the southernmost part of his 70-mile range. He ambles along in the orange glow of a night sky set afire from a steel mill. The monstrous penumbra of his form is cast on the side of a factory wall like an image in a horror movie. Outside the building are two long benches lined with metal lunch buckets where several men who work the night shift eat while catching the cool breeze that streams down the mountain. It's always lunchtime for Ursa, however, and he pilfers each pail, one at a time, opening them in a brushy gully, eating the contents, then returning for the next. He devours 16 sandwiches of ham and bologna and garlic kielbasa, juicy peaches and bananas, cookies and thick slices of pie. Ursa is caught red-handed by the first worker to appear at the lunch benches. The man stands slackjawed, face to face with the black behemoth, fur fringed in orange light as if on fire, a sinister creature from a darker place. The worker tries to yell, but can emit only a hoarse gasp, then bolts back into the plant while Ursa gently lifts the last pail and hustles into the night to finish his lunch.

Native Americans believed that the constellation Ursa Major was a great bear being chased across the night sky by three hunters. In autumn, when it rides low in the horizon, they thought the celestial bear to be wounded by the hunters, and its blood caused the trees to change the color of their leaves to red.

An October morning and Ursa follows the course of a stream lined by blood-red trees. He stops at a crystal pool and stares into the depths at a tiny brook trout fanning in the slow current. The bear's eyes sparkle, and in one mighty leap he dives into the pool, the concussion of water deafening in the tiny glade. He lunges wildly in a circle, the trout long gone, but he thrashes about, merrily chasing imaginary fish through pool after pool, splashing noisily as he runs full tilt up the creek then far up a fern-covered sidehill.



Bear season, and a teenage hunter, wiry and longshanked, snakes through a dense thicket, carrying a new .250 Savage. It's drizzling and cold, and milkweed silk clings to the peach fuzz on his face. He climbs a blowdown for a better view when a drive put on by a neighboring camp passes through the thicket once and then again. He



likes the stand and stays there until near quitting time, having spent most of the day admiring his new rifle. He climbs down from his seat on the split trunk, and with this change of eye level cannot believe his eyes at what appears to be the huge head of a black bear staring at him only 20 yards away.

The bear is under another windfall, and when the young hunter steps closer, the bear quickly slips out of its hiding place, but so large as to appear in slow motion. The gun suddenly feels inadequate, and the surge of adrenaline causes his knees to weaken and the sights to wave crazily, and the shards of his childhood scatter through the brush like splinters from a sapling he centers with his hurried shot. He ejects the brass that is the spent casing of his boyhood, and the next round jacked into the chamber is of a different, mature persona, and in those moments his life is changed forever as myth becomes truth, and his tale would now be inscribed in the ancient annals of the hunt.

Ursa walks along a rail line that wraps around the mountain and stops near a trestle. He feeds on fallen apples from a tree grown from an apple core tossed from the train years before. Down near the river several hounds sing promises to their masters as a coon heads up the slope. The hounds are hot on the scent, and Ursa shuffles off when they get too close. At that instant a train whistle fractures the air as it rounds the bend and steams across the trestle. Ursa runs flat out along the rails, the baying hounds just below him, and in a moment of confusion, he dashes across the tracks and is struck by the locomotive and is thrown from the rails, broken and bleeding. Frightened, he scrambles for the safety of a thicket, but the intense pain, like an unseen tormentor, follows.

The train passes and the hounds bark treed down by the river. At first light the sky opens and sheets of rain pound the valley. Ursa struggles to drag his heavy form along the base of a towering escarpment. He is wracked with fever and laps water from the hollow of a rock.

Cool air ushers up out of the ground from a large gap between boulders and fills his nostrils, not unlike the earthy air of his birthing den. He crawls into the gap and turns around in a small anteroom. He lies down then backs up slightly but slides on the wet rock. Too weak to gain purchase, he falls into black space deep into a huge chamber of the mountains from which he was sprung.

A night in early spring, and water perculates up and flows through the steer skull, gushing from its sockets like some forlorn and tragic fountain. Far below the surface, the bones of the great bear lie upon those of other creatures and others yet from an older time. Ursa Major, the Great Bear, drifts through a celestial thicket above the Alleghenies. Starry hunters follow.

FIELD NOTES

Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

BUTLER — During computer training in Harrisburg, officers from the Northwest Region learned some new computer jargon. Instead of a computer "mouse," one officer insisted on calling it a muskrat, and another officer was "double tapping" on a file instead of double clicking.

— WCO KEVIN W. THOMPSON, SAXONBURG

What are the Odds?

MONROE — After picking up a deer I thought had been hit by a car, I noticed a strange black mark on top of its head. Just then a neighbor pulled up to tell me his daughter had seen the deer get hit by lightning while crossing a field near the road.

— WCO VICTOR E. ROSA, FLEETVILLE

Give Me a Bagful

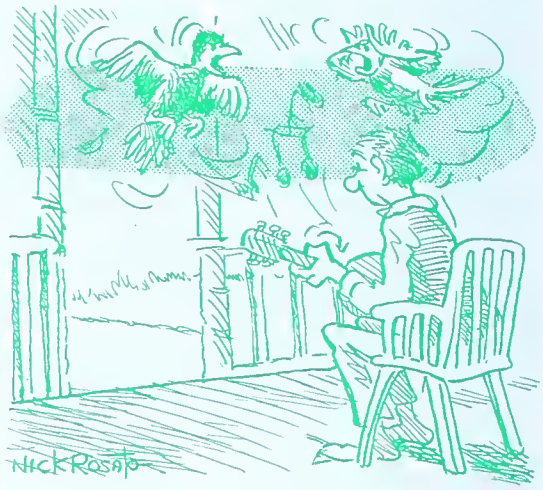
CRAWFORD — A first-time spring turkey hunter, Chris asked my wife — his sixth grade teacher — to write him a good luck note. It seems Chris was collecting good luck notes from his family and friends, and he figured the more notes he could carry in his hunting vest on opening day, the better luck he would have.

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE

Gobblin' Up the Opportunities

Deputy Rob Cochran and I checked a hunter in the Beaver Meadows area of Forest County who was carrying a 20-pound bird with an 8-inch beard. The man told us he has been hunting in Pennsylvania for more than 30 years, and that his nonresident license was the best bargain around. He said, "I buy all the licenses you guys sell and it comes to about $160. I only wish I could get a job in this area to move up here."

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, NW REGION OFFICE, FRANKLIN



Can't Carry a Tune

CLARION — I've been learning to play a mandolin but progress is slow and my wife becomes annoyed when I play the same tune over and over. One evening when my wife wasn't home I began playing while sitting on the porch, and partway through "The Wreck of Old Ninety-Seven" some robins that had a nest nearby took offense and began scolding me loudly. Maybe the high pitch of the mandolin irritated the birds, or maybe they just don't like bluegrass music. Those birds, and my wife, should be grateful I didn't take up drums.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Plan B

UNION — Phoebe Sampsell of Laurelton had a robin build a nest just above her front door, despite her removing the nesting material several times. Phoebe's husband then placed a board above the door to discourage the persistent bird, but that didn't work, either. Phoebe placed some aluminum foil on the board, thinking that would scare the robin, but that plan was "foiled," too. Phoebe finally found a solution: She used the back door until the robin raised its brood.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Surprise Guest

The Mosquito Creek Sportsmen's Association received a Growing Greener Grant to use to neutralize the low pH in Mosquito Creek caused by acid rain. The watershed is located primarily on state forest and game lands, and the project will be a cooperative effort involving four agencies and many sportsmen. Dan Spadoni of the Department of Environmental Resources organized a news conference at the headwaters of the stream on SGL 34 to announce the project and, just after he gave his opening remarks, a large bull elk emerged from the woods and stood around for a few minutes, seemingly interested in hearing about the conservation effort.

— LMO Colleen M. Shannon, Grampian



Eyeful

Pike — Local sporting goods shop owner Dennis Heimbrook was taking a shower one afternoon when he was startled by a scream from his wife, Carol. Running to see what was wrong, he found her desperately trying to keep a young bear away from supper broiling on the gas grill on the patio. The bear was very determined, though, and shouting and banging pots and pans had no effect. The standoff ended, however, when Dennis's towel fell off. The sight was just too much for the bear, and it was last seen heading for the woods at a high rate of speed. I hope the bear is not emotionally scarred for life.

— WCO Robert D. Buss, Hawley

Getting Around

Being assigned to the Southeast Region Office out of the training school, I've worked in every county in the southeast except Philadelphia and York (I was a deputy in York). I guess you can say I'm taking my show on the road.

— WCO Harold Malehorn, SE Region Office, Reading

Look Around

Faced with ever encroaching development, we continue to lose farmland and wetland habitat at an alarming rate. This should give us cause for concern and serve as a warning that constant, responsible vigilance is needed on our part. But, on the other hand, many species such as bald eagles, otters, fishers, ospreys, turkeys and black bears continue to increase. While trout fishing with my oldest daughter, Sarah, at Oil Creek, a bald eagle landed in a tree near us. To have her experience the thrill of seeing our national symbol up close just reinforces that these can indeed be some of the best of times if we only open our eyes and notice what's around us.

— IES Regis F. Senko, NW Region Office, Franklin

An Outrage

Someone willfully destroyed more than 20 tree tubes, stakes and the trees within on SGL 236 by blasting them with a shotgun. This vandalism cost hundreds of dollars, and is a tragic waste of hunting license dollars.

— LMO John C. Shutkufski, Damascus

Now What?

Montour & Northumberland — At an HTE class in Danville a student asked instructors Mark Schmid and Will Delbo if the test questions were all common sense. When Will said that this was pretty much the case, the youngster got a worried look on his face and said, "I think I'm in trouble, because my mom is always asking me where my common sense is."

— WCO Randy L. Shoup, Danville



Fashion Statement

MONROE — Bear nuisance calls are an everyday occurrence here. Calls range from bears tearing open garbage cans to taking dips in backyard hot tubs. When I received a call about a bear that stole a dress and a pair of high heels from a lady's porch, though, I knew I wasn't dealing with your average bear.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Hunter Became the Hunted

BRADFORD — John Castle of Canton was turkey hunting this spring and had been calling for quite some time when he heard something coming towards him. A bobcat soon materialized and stopped only six feet away. John cautiously moved his foot and the cat pounced on it, but quickly realized its mistake and ran off.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Diamond in the Rough

YORK — Deputy Robert Frederick and I were checking a couple of bald eagle nests on the Susquehanna River when he commented about the many new housing developments we had seen on the way to the river, and that he wished this "progress" would stop. I said that at least we are part of good progress, because it was not that long ago that bald eagles were absent from this mighty watershed.

— DEPUTY SCOTT FREDERICK, YORK

Looking Good

WASHINGTON — I've been seeing plenty of turkeys and deer, as well as good numbers of rabbits and squirrels in my district. The upcoming hunting seasons look promising.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Mystery Solved

LUZERNE — A woman called claiming a bear had run off with her golf bag. When I arrived at the scene, the women pointed to where she had last seen the bandit. After a short walk I found the bag with its contents scattered all around. Trying to figure out what made the bear take the bag, I soon discovered the wrapper from a Power Bar that had been in the bag.

— WCO MATTHEW M. GREBECK, SHICKSHINNY

Country in the City

DAUPHIN — Here only two months, I'm amazed at the diversity of wildlife so close to the state capital. I've encountered bears, bobcats, beavers, bald eagles, coyotes and peregrine falcons, all within three miles of the Harrisburg City line.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN



Out of Luck

HUNTINGDON — After spending a day setting culvert bear traps all over the county, I returned home only to find muddy bear prints all over my patio glass door. Who do I complain to?

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON



Appreciate It All the More

BERKS — During the spring gobbler season I met a hunter who mentioned that he also hunts turkeys in Connecticut. He told me that turkey hunters there must choose between a permit for state land or private land. Hunters who choose to hunt private land must carry an official form at all times, stating that hunting permission has been given. The gentleman told me he enjoys having the freedom to choose where he will hunt, and of how much he values our state game lands.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Sincere Thanks

"Teamroad 2000," a group of school students, teachers and parents here, cleaned up 200 tires and a ton of garbage that had been dumped along a road on SGL 264.

— LMO SCOTT R. BILLS, HALIFAX

Doesn't Respect Elders

Robert Space, 84, of Mountaintop has been feeding wildlife and walking in his patch of woods for years. Recently, though, Mr. Space has been experiencing a problem with a ruffed grouse. It seems that every time Bob goes for his morning walk, the grouse follows, continually pecking at him and flopping its wings, until Bob feeds it. I suggest he stop feeding, change his appearance or walk a different route.

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NE REGION OFFICE, DALLAS

Pearly Whites

MCKEAN — I was patrolling during the spring gobbler season when I noticed a set of dentures on a trail in a wooded area. I placed the dentures and a note on a tree limb next to the trail, where they were plainly visible. After walking several yards I looked back and had to chuckle, as I noticed I had placed them in a flowering dogwood tree, giving the tree a bite equal to its bark.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Not Quite Yet

DELAWARE — During my first week in my new district I was driving around, looking for a place to live, and noticed a nice townhouse complex. After entering the office, however, I immediately discovered I was in a retirement community. I think I'll wait a little while — say about 30 years — before I'm ready to check that place out again.

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, ASTON

Good Deed for the Day

BUCKS — A hen mallard was disrupting traffic along routes 309 and 663 because her ducklings had gotten trapped in a stormwater drain. Four enthusiastic volunteers came to my assistance to get them out. Janet Sloane from Quakertown located a small net, and Herschel Baxter, Mike Burkit and Brian Melendez helped lift two metal grates, entered the drain and captured the 14 ducklings.

— WCO STEVE HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE

Got the Right Stuff

GREENE — Attending a National Wild Turkey Federation banquet here, I was pleased to hear from the sportsmen and women that they had an excellent spring turkey season here. It seems that the majority of the birds harvested came from game lands, too. My hat's off to the Food and Cover crews for all their efforts.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, CARMICHAELS

Different Game

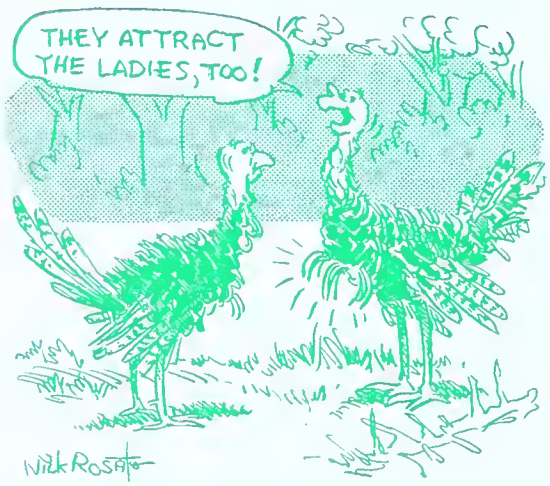
BUCKS — I was manning our display at the Oxford Valley Mall, when a woman handed me a *Game News* and said that it was misleading because there was only one puzzle in the whole magazine. She was on her way before I could explain, but at least she didn't ask me for lottery tickets.

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, FOUNTAINVILLE

Should be Proud

WARREN — Congratulations to the Tidioute High School's J.V. Envirothon team for taking first place in their division at the Warren County Envirothon.

— WCO DUSTIN STONER, TIDIOUTE



Big Bird

POTTER — Gerald Runkle, East Fork Sportsmen's Association member, shot a gobbler that weighed more than 20 pounds and sported three beards that totaled more than 20 inches.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, RENOVO

Motherly Instinct

FULTON — Bill Barling noticed a doe in a field behind his home that was guarding the remains of her fawn that had been killed by farm machinery. The doe would charge and flush turkey vultures from the carcass each time they approached.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Got the Knack

WYOMING — Brenda Charles was driving to work one day when she spotted a porcupine stumbling blindly along the highway, with its head stuck inside a can. Walter Stonier had also stopped, and not wanting to be quilled, he deftly lifted the can with both hands and quickly shook the porcupine out. Some folks really know how to empty a can of porc'n beans in a hurry.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Sincere Thanks

CRAWFORD — As coordinator for the Youth Field Day here, I would like to thank everyone who helped make our event, and every other Field Day across the commonwealth, a success. Without the generous giving of time and resources, these events would not be possible.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Special Touch

FRANKLIN — I was called to a store parking lot to remove an opossum that was staggering around. I began assembling my animal carrier to remove the obviously sick animal when it walked right over and climbed into the crate. A woman standing nearby said, "Do all you game wardens have that animal magnetism?"

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Hidden Treasure

YORK — York City has a small urban park called Farquhar Park about a mile from the center square. The city was doing some improvements around the small lake in the park, so officials called me for some recommendations regarding wildlife in their planning. While at the site I discovered a black crown night heron rookery, so I called PGC ornithologist Dan Brauning for an expert opinion. We counted 52 active nests in two areas of less than one acre. There are only six known colonies in Pennsylvania, with this one possibly being the largest.

— WCO RODNEY MEE, EAST BERLIN

Historic peregrine falcon chicks banded

FOUR PEREGRINE falcon chicks that were hatched and raised on the 15th floor ledge of the Rachel Carson Building in downtown Harrisburg were banded June 1. Their lives were chronicled through a live Internet window and viewed around the world, giving the nestling peregrines an celebrity status.

"Identification bands help us monitor individual birds after they fledge and disperse," explained PGC biologist Dan Brauning. "We hope these young falcons will leave in the fall and set up their own territories somewhere in Pennsylvania in coming years. Some may eventually return to the Harrisburg area.

"The nesting female on the Rachel Carson Building was banded by me as a chick on the Girard Point Bridge over the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia in 1998. This is the first Pennsylvania-produced peregrine to return to the commonwealth to nest. Banded young from other Pennsylvania sites have gone on to nest in Ohio, Michigan and Ontario, Canada."

The banding was broadcast live via the GreenWorks Channel website and before a live audience of more than 160 students and teachers from central Pennsylvania schools. The students had been following the progress of the falcons via the Internet and through the use of special lesson plans developed by the Game Commission, DEP and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Dr. Ron Wilson of Hershey's Zoo America performed a health check on the chicks during the banding.

"Our peregrine site on the agency's Internet homepage drew more than 12 million hits since April," noted Department of Environmental Protection Secretary James M. Seif. "Everyone seems to be interested in these birds."

For the past two years, DEP's website has featured pictures, refreshed every five minutes, of the falcon nest. This spring, through the GreenWorks Channnel, live video of the falcons was added to the website, to allow viewers to watch as the eggs hatched.

"We are pleased to provide this rare opportunity to watch nature innocently unfold above the busy streets of the state's capital," GreenWorks Channel Executive Director Timothy J. Schlitzer said.

Joe Kosack



FOUR peregrine falcon chicks were banded in early June, before they were fully mature and left their nest site on the Rachel Carson Building in downtown Harrisburg.

Peregrines disappeared from Pennsylvania around 1960, because DDT inhibited their reproduction process. The insecticide, acquired by peregrines through eating contaminated prey, induced falcons to lay eggs with shells so thin they broke when birds sat on them.

Peregrines were listed as an endangered species by the federal government in 1970. It also was on Pennsylvania's first endangered species list, developed in 1978.

Today peregrines remain a state endangered species. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, however, has removed the bird from the federal endangered and threatened species lists. There are currently about 1,650 breeding pairs in the United States and Canada, 10 in Pennsylvania.

"I'm delighted about the stir these peregrine chicks have caused," noted PGC Executive Director Vern Ross. "Pennsylvanians, not to mention viewers from around the world, are watching over these young birds with obvious delight and concern for their well-being."

The peregrine project at the Rachel Carson Building is a joint effort involving the Game Commission, DEP and DCNR. In 1996, the agencies placed a nesting box on the 15th floor ledge of the building, located at 400 Market Street in Harrisburg. Soon after, a male and female falcon began nesting in the box.

The female didn't produce eggs for two years. It was then found to be a hybrid incapable of reproducing, and taken to the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. The male falcon this past spring attracted the Girard Point Bridge female to the nesting box.

The female began laying eggs in late March. The four eggs hatched on May 3 and 4. The chicks, also known as "eyases," grew quickly. They started to leave the nest in mid-June.

Large buildings and city bridges are attractive to peregrines because they're usually located near an outstanding food base of pigeons and wild birds adjusted to city living, and the ledges are relatively inaccessible to humans and other predators.

That the Rachel Carson Building was used in this instance is particularly fitting. Born in Springdale, Allegheny County, in 1907, Rachel Carson is credited as almost single-handedly starting the environmental awareness movement of the 1960s. Her book, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, alerted the world of the devastating environmental damage the indiscriminate use and dumping of DDT and other chemicals were causing to the environment.

The Game Commission began trying to reintroduce peregrines in the late 1970s. The agency, in cooperation with the Peregrine Fund, participated in the state's first successful peregrine reintroduction in 1981, when four young peregrines were hacked — acclimated in an enclosure and eventually released — on a ledge of the Philadelphia National Bank.

Peregrines began nesting in Pennsylvania in 1987. These were peregrines released in a massive reintroduction effort that began in the 1970s and concluded in the mid '90s. More than 2,000 young falcons were hacked in the program.

The first successful peregrine falcon reintroduction in Harrisburg occurred in 1992 when three chicks were hacked from the Fulton Bank Building. The chicks were hatched in captivity by Allen and Connie Pollard of Dillsburg, from eggs taken from a Philadelphia area bridge nest with a poor track record for producing young. Improvements to bridge nesting sites — inclusion of gravel-lined nest

PGC biologist Dan Brauning and land management officer Scott Bills attach a leg band to a peregrine falcon chick hatched in downtown Harrisburg. The young birds began to leave the nest in mid-June.



Joe Kosack

boxes — have increased nesting success since then.

Peregrines were never common breeders in Pennsylvania, but ornithologists believe they historically nested at 36 sites, mostly cliffs. Females are larger and heavier than males. Both males and females participate in incubation and young-rearing chores.

Peregrines prey on small to mid-sized birds. The Harrisburg pair has shown a preference for pigeons and starlings. Peregrines, commonly referred to as the "world's fastest bird," are strong fliers and can reach speeds in excess of 200 mph when diving for prey, which they hit in flight. In normal flight, peregrines travel at 40 to 50 mph.

To see the banding of the falcons, visit the DEP website through the Pennsylvania homepage at www.state.pa.us; or directly at www.dep.state.pa.us (click on the falcon) or visit www.-GreenWorksChannel.org.

Turkey study update

THE SPRING gobbler season on Turkey Management Area (TMA) 7B study area ended on a good note. "We found that no radio-marked hens were illegally harvested," PGC biologist Mary Jo Casalena reported. "One hunter did, legally, take a hen with a 7.5-inch beard midway through the season. A second bearded hen, with a 6-inch beard, was killed by a predator just prior to the season."

Of the 50 radio-marked hens alive one week before the hunting season, three had beards. "This is not so uncommon." Casalena said. "Other studies have shown that up to a third of a hen population can possess small or pencil-thin beards. The third bearded hen eluded hunters, but still wasn't incubating eggs by early June.

Of the 22 marked males, two had radio transmitters, the remainder were just legbanded. The adult gobbler wearing a radio transmitter was taken by a hunter on the second Saturday of the season; the jake was never harvested. Only one of the legbanded jakes was harvested by a hunter on opening day.

During May, seven of the 43 radio-marked hens died. Five were killed by predators, one died of unknown causes (only the transmitter remained), and the one bearded hen was harvested legally.

Of the 43 hens alive in May, 30 had begun to incubate eggs. By early June, 23 of those 30 and 7 of 13 one-year-old hens had attempted to nest. Typically one-year old hens have a lower nesting rate than adult hens. Also by early June, three nests had hatched, three hens abandoned their nests and two nests were destroyed by predators.

"Our first two nests hatched on May 25 and 26, and the third hatched on May 30," Casalena said. "Clutch sizes were 13, 14 and 15 eggs. All the eggs hatched from the two larger nests and 12 of 13 hatched from the other. Typically, the first nests to hatch were those of adult hens.

This study is designed to determine why wild turkey populations are suppressed in TMA 7B. Funded by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Game Commission and Penn State University, and with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry cooperating, the study began in August 1999 and will continue through December 2001.

Following is a summary of Casalena's report.

Spring Turkey Harvest of Marked Turkeys:

1) Adult hen with 6-inch beard and radio-transmitter was killed by a predator before the season. While preseason scouting, a hunter was standing against a tree and saw a red fox walking toward him with something in its mouth. When the fox was approximately 10 feet away, it saw him, dropped the leg and ran off. The hunter knew the leg was from a hen turkey or small jake, because it had no spurs. The leg was still warm and pliable. He assumed the fox killed the hen while she was incubating her clutch of eggs.

2) Jake with 2.75-inch beard and leg band was harvested on opening day in Cumberland County on the Michaux State Forest.

3) Adult gobbler with 9-inch beard and radio transmitter was taken in Adams County. Reported by the hunter and transmitter retrieved.

4) Adult hen with 7.5-inch beard and radio transmitter. Harvested May 11, in Cumberland County; reported by the hunter and transmitter retrieved. Hen came in to the hunter's decoy. Hunter contemplated for about 10 minutes before pulling the trigger. He decided to take this bearded hen and have it mounted.

Game farm tours slated for September

GUIDED TOURS of the Game Commission's four game farms will be offered this September. The tours will begin at noon and conclude at 3 p.m. Visitors must register on the day of the tour, before it begins. Following registration, a short video highlighting the farm operations will be shown.

Game farm personnel will then conduct a guided field trip to pheasant breeder pens, hatchery, brooder house, and rearing and grow-out pens. To minimize human disturbance, visitors must remain with their group. Discussion will focus on objectives in propagation management, including sportsmen's organizations participating in raising day-old chicks provided by the farms to increase local hunting opportunities, and surplus day-old hen chicks which are sold to the public.

Tour dates and directions to the game farms are:

September 17

Loyalsock Game Farm, Lycoming County, located five miles North of Montoursville on Route 87.

Northcentral Game Farm, Williamsport, located 23 miles north of Montoursville on Route 87.

Southwest Game Farm, Armstrong County, two miles south of New

Bethlehem, off routes 66 & 28.

September 24

Western Game Farm, Crawford County, located 3½ miles east of Cambridge Springs on Route 408.

More than 200,000 ring-necked pheasants are produced on the commission's game farms and released each year. This program provides a tangible product for the license buyers, adds diversity to the hunting experience at a time when wild pheasant populations are low, and is a valued service for many sportsmen.

Middle Creek & Pymatuning programs and art show

THE MIDDLE CREEK art show and informative programs are on tap at the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas this month.

The 15th Annual Ned Smith Wildlife Art Show will showcase the works of more than 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. Show times are Friday, August 4, Noon - 8 p.m.; Saturday, August 5, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; and Sunday, August 6, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



On August 23 & 24, Steve Rannels will present "Crickets and Katydids," featuring sound recordings and slides that will describe and show how to identify the various species of crickets and katydids. A short field trip will be offered after the program.

The programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

At Pymatuning on August 12, join PGC biologist Dr. Matt Lovallo to learn about 15 years of scientific research and the management plan for Pennsylvania bobcats.



On August 26, an outdoor photography program will be presented. Bring your camera and equipment, and be prepared to venture afield. Participants should be proficient in basic camera operation. Please bring your own print or slide film, nature provided.

Programs are free at Pymatuning. They start at 2 p.m. and are held at the visitors center located near Linesville, Crawford County.



MARY JANE STRETCH, Director of the AARK Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center in Newton, Bucks County, was presented with a 2000 Working Together for Wildlife print in recognition of her service as a founder and member of the agency's Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Council.

Hambley appointed northcentral director

BARRY R. HAMBLEY has been appointed as the new director for the Northcentral Region. In making the announcement, Executive Director Vern Ross remarked, "Barry Hambley has been an important part of the Game Commission's team for more than 28 years. He brings to the Northcentral Region Office a firm dedication to protecting and preserving wildlife and a commitment to help carry on Pennsylvania's rich hunting and trapping heritage."

As region director, Hambley is responsible for all Game Commission information and education programs and law enforcement activities in the 10-county Northcentral Region. He also will oversee the habitat improvement projects and all other land management activities on 313,319 acres of state game lands in the region.

Since 1993, Hambley served as Northeast Region Law Enforcement Supervisor, where he oversaw 26 WCOs and their deputies. Hambley began his career with the Game Commission in 1972, when he was commissioned as a Wildlife Conservation Officer for Sullivan County.

A Vietnam veteran, Hambley served in the U.S. Navy from 1964 through 1971. He is a member of the American Legion Post #0601, Muncy Valley.

Hambley graduated from Cambria Heights High School in Patton,



Cambria County, and attended Chapman College in Orange, California, from 1970-71.

A native of Hastings, Cambria County, Hambley and his wife, Barbara, currently live in Laporte, Sullivan County. They have two children, Keith and Ellen.

The agency's Northcentral Region is comprised of Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga and Union counties. There are 75 employees in the region and 47 state game lands. The office is at 1566 South Route 44 Highway, Post Office Box 5038, Jersey Shore, 17740-5038. The toll-free number is 1-877-877-7674.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

1999 hunting-related shootings lowest ever

IN 1999 there were only 83 hunting related shooting incidents, including four fatalities. This is the lowest number of incidents ever recorded in the 85 years records have been kept. The incident rate of 8.08/100,000 participants is the third lowest on record.

"While even one hunting incident is one too many," said Keith Snyder, chief of the Hunter-Trapper Education Division, "the marked decline of these shooting incidents can be attributed to hunter education training and mandatory use of fluorescent orange clothing."

A hunting related shooting incident is defined as an occurrence when a person is injured as the result of a discharge of a firearm or bow and arrow while hunting or trapping. Often these incidents result from failure to follow safety rules.

The second safest hunting year on record was 1993, when 85 incidents (including 4 fatalities) occurred. The incident rate that year was 7.37 per 100,000 hunters, which is the lowest incident rate on record.

In 1999, most of the incidents occurred during the big game seasons: wild turkey, 30; and deer, 18. Other leading categories included squirrel hunting, 14; rabbit, 12; and pheasant, 4. The average age of persons causing these incidents is 29 and with 16 years hunting experience. The agency sold 1,027,193 hunting/furtaking licenses last year.

Failure to properly identify the intended target was the most common cause of a shooting incident, as 24 individuals were shot in mistake for game. Of those, 19 occurred during turkey seasons; 4 during small game seasons; and one while coyote hunting. Other causes of shooting incidents were: in-the-line-of-fire, 23; accidental discharge, 10; ricochet, 7; stray shot, 5; dropped sporting arm, 3; sporting arm in dangerous position, 2; slipped and/or fell, 2; defective firearm, 2; and other, 5.

Of the four fatalities in 1999, three were inflicted by others and one was self-inflicted. Of the remaining 79 incidents, 60 were inflicted by others and 19 were self-inflicted.

Information about hunting related shooting incidents dating back to 1991 is posted on the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Select "Hunter-Trapper Education," then "Incident Statistics". Information on hunter-trapper education and bowhunter education, including a county-by-county schedule of classes, also may be viewed at the "Hunter-Trapper Education" section.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

1999 Hunting Incident Report

Species

	F	N-F	T
Deer	2	16	18
Turkey	1	29	30
Small Game	0	32	32
Waterfowl	0	1	1
Furbearer	1	0	1
Other	0	1	1

Sporting Arm Used

	F	N-F	T
Shotgun	0	60	60
Rifle	2	16	18
Revolver	1	3	4
Muzzleloader	1	0	1

Ages Of Victims

	F	N-F	T
Under 12	0	1	1
12 to 15 years of age	0	10	10
16 to 20 years of age	0	9	9
21 to 50 years of age	2	50	52
Over 50 years of age	2	9	11

Ages Of Persons Inflicting Injury

	F	N-F	T
12 to 15 years of age	0	8	8
16 to 20 years of age	0	13	13
21 to 50 years of age	4	35	39
Over 50 years of age	0	11	11
Not Reported	0	12	12

Hunting Experience Of Persons Inflicting Injury

	F	N-F	T
Less than 2 years	0	8	8
2 – 5 years	0	11	11
6 – 10 years	1	9	10
Over 10 years	3	39	42
Not reported	0	12	12

Cause of Incident

	F	N-F	T
Sporting arm dangerous position	0	2	2
Unintentional discharge	0	10	10
Stray shot	0	5	5
Ricochet	0	7	7
Line of fire	1	22	23
Slipped and/or fell	0	2	2
Dropped sporting arm	1	2	3
Shot for game	2	22	24
Sport arm defective	0	2	2
Used sport arm as club	0	1	1
Other	0	4	4

Mistaken For Game - Distances

	F	N-F	T
0 to 25 feet	0	0	0
26 to 75 feet	0	3	3
76 to 150 feet	1	13	14
151 to 300 feet	0	6	6
Over 300 feet	1	0	1

Place Of Incident

	F	N-F	T
Field	0	15	15
Woodland	4	54	58
Marsh/Bog	0	2	2
Vehicle	0	3	3
Road or Highway	0	4	4
Open water	0	1	1

Weather Conditions

	F	N-F	T
Clear	2	56	58
Overcast	1	16	17
Fog	0	1	1
Rain	1	3	3
Snow	1	3	4

Light Conditions

	F	N-F	T
Dawn	0	4	4
Daylight	3	73	76
Dusk	1	1	2
Dark	0	1	1

Incident Summary

Fatal	
◆ Self-Inflicted	1
◆ Inflicted by others	3
Non-Fatal	
◆ Self-Inflicted	19
◆ Inflicted by others	60
Total	83

Rate per 100,000 hunters	
◆ Fatal:	0.39
◆ Nonfatal	7.69
Total	8.08

Partnership saves wildlife habitat



John Plowman

THANKS to cooperation between public and private partners, an "instant thicket" of high value wildlife trees and shrubs was transplanted from PennDOT's U.S. Route 15 and Lisburn Road interchange project in Cumberland County to the nearby Appalachian Audubon 27-acre Trout Run Nature Preserve.

Over four weekends, the volunteer work crew pruned, mechanically lifted and transplanted nearly 20 crabapples and white cedars, some of which are more than 15 years old and 20 feet tall. The salvage of the trees was made possible only due to the collective effort of Audubon members and other conservation volunteers, technical assistance from DCNR, Game Commission and PennDOT, and backed up with extensive labor and equipment services donated by Norman McCurdy of McCurdy's Landscaping Service near Dillsburg.

Game News goes online

GAME NEWS is now featured on the Game Commission's website. Included are a table of contents of the current month's issue, brief descriptions of stories, columns and other features, a sampling of Field Notes, and complete versions of the editorial, Game Commission related articles and other items written by agency personnel, and a subscription ordering form.

To reach the site, go to the agency's homepage, www.pgc.state.pa.us, and click on "Pennsylvania Game News Online."



Jack Winieski

BOB BAUER, left, PGC Forestry Regional Supervisor, received the 1999 Outstanding Service to Forestry award from the Society of American Foresters. Mike Lester, chairman, presented the award at the SAF winter meeting in Titusville.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Hiking established trails is a great way to get exercise, scout for game, or just to see what's beyond the next hill.

Happy Trails

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL runs smack-dab through the town of Damascus, Virginia. That's what the white rectangles painted on the main drag's electric poles mean. The dabs of paint are trail markers. The little burgh of Damascus is a designated "Trail Town USA," because the venerable "A.T." as well as the Virginia Creeper Rail-Trail run into the village, which derives a lot of its local economy from hiking and mountain biking visitors — like me.

I wouldn't say that those white marks on the poles were what got me started, but they helped me realize what I've barely tasted and what is out there waiting. That is, trails. Lots of trails through lots of country I haven't seen yet. Some of the trails are new and some have been in place for years, but, like suddenly noticing the A.T. trail markers in Damascus, I just wasn't paying attention. I am now.

I've done a lot of walking in the woods, mostly in hunting season, and mostly off-trail. While afield with bow or gun I have walked paths, too, old woods roads remaining from logging jobs or settlements long abandoned. At times, while hunting, I encountered trails that were definite lanes and showed the wear of people passage. These had intermittent, odd marks on trailside trees and sometimes mid-path rocks — painted strips of white, red, blue, yellow, orange or some other color.

These were blazes of formal hiking trails. Often I didn't know where the trail I stumbled upon began or ended. Sometimes I did, and that awed me. In one instance I bowhunted to the top of a mountain on the New Jersey side of the Delaware Water Gap, paused to let my heartbeat go back to normal, and found I was standing on a white-marked trail, the Appalachian.

From this weathered and rocky top, that day rimed with frost, I could walk, if I had the urge and ability, one way to Mt. Katahdin in Maine and the other to

Linda Steiner



HIKER atop Tussey Ridge, on Jackson Trail, south of State College. The large boulder jumbles along the top of Tussey Ridge look more like the higher, barer mountains in New England than anything else here in Pennsylvania.

Springer Mountain, Georgia. The length of the whole Appalachian Trail is more than 2,200 miles. I shivered then, whether from the cold or the thought of a hike of that magnitude, and went back down the mountain toward the oak benches, where there were acorns, deer and a car that would take me to a warm, snug home.

Still, trails pull me with their possibilities. Hardly meaning to, I have been on the Appalachian Trail three times this year. I walked sections so short as to be laughable to "through hikers," those who tackle the whole A.T. at once — about 175 a year, at the National Park Service's last count. Besides my encounter with the trail on a southwest Virginia sidewalk, I hiked about a dozen miles in the nearby Mt. Rogers high country, starting out from a trailhead charmingly called "Elk Garden." "Trailhead," in hiking jargon, means a place you can access a trail, more importantly, a good spot to park your car.

I was on the Appalachian Trail again later in the spring, on an overnight van camping trip at Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Cumberland County. The A.T. here was different from the in-town slice in Damascus and the true "rocks and roots" hiking path at Mt. Rogers. At Pine Grove Furnace, the Appalachian Trail comes out of the backcountry and traverses the park as a nearly flat, packed limestone path, and a true stroll-in-the-park. Pine Grove Furnace State Park is a notable place on the Appalachian Trail: It's the halfway point between the route's north and south ends. I would imagine the easy walk and the developed campground and youth hostel are very welcome to long-range A.T. walkers.

I can't see myself as a through-hiker or even taking on the punctuated task of hiking the Appalachian Trail in total, section by section. If I were 20 instead of 50, maybe. I like to do too many other things in the outdoors. But trails do intrigue me, with their sheer "start here and see where I take you" message. They're a thread to follow, laid down on the landscape; the next trail marker a retreating and always tantalizing beacon.

I could say that hiking trails are appealing ways to scout for hunting season, but I have closer-to-home spots I prefer for most hunting. Besides, the trails I like best are rarely in woods hospitable to lots of game. They're on mountaintops with scant soil and stunted trees, but they do have spectacular views. Sometimes the prime trails are not in woods at all, like those I walked above timberline on Mount Jefferson, and among granite boulders and alpine grasses in New Hampshire's White Mountains.

Last May I hiked a loop, the Jackson Trail, atop Tussey Ridge, on the border of Pennsylvania's Centre and Huntingdon counties. The Jackson Trail (trailhead on Route 26 south of Pine Grove Mills) ran along the crest of the narrow ridge. The large boulder jumbles scattered along the top made Tussey Ridge look more like the higher, barer mountains I've hiked in New England than anything else here in Pennsylvania.

Jackson Trail bisected with the Mid-State Trail, dropped into the hollow of Shaver Creek, and climbed the hill again to the parking lot. A good bit of turkey scratching was evident in the hollow, but this was a Sunday and no spring gobbler hunters were trying for the toms that must have been on that state forestland. I have more turkey sign in the woods behind my house, so those gobblers don't have to worry about me.

I could say that hiking helps to keep or get me in shape for the hunting seasons, and that is certainly true. In the off-seasons, when it's easy to park in front of the TV, knowing the trails are out there, waiting, is a spur to be walking and exercising the muscles, heart and lungs, as well as honing the keenness of my woods' eyes and ears. Having done extra walking can't hurt come hunting season.

Yet my main interest in hiking isn't as practical as that. It's self-indulgent. I like the idea of marked hiking trails because

they are safe adventure. Someone else has done the hard work, the going out on the unblazed landscape and putting down a route that I can follow to some definite, knowable spot — like back to the car. I've wandered plenty through trackless woods and painstakingly learned landscapes, so it's a nice break to follow someone else's lead. On the trail I can relax and enjoy the walk and the scenery, and what wildlife I might see, and won't get lost.

A favorite, easy hike, that is long enough to give a feeling of accomplishment, is the trail in the Hickory Creek Wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest. This 11-mile loop is on a plateau, so there's no huffing up long climbs. The trail is marked by yellow paint blazes and is obvious otherwise by being a worn footpath. The Hickory Creek Trail has no panoramic overlooks, just pleasant woods with a feeling of timelessness and of time at work. As a designated Wilderness Area, the forest there is left alone for nature to work on, with no human intervention.

The day I made that hike, with a lunch stop and time out for photos, I left at 10 a.m. and was back at the trailhead at 5 p.m. That was not record speed, but still proof this backpack hike can be done in a day. Don't count on making more than about two miles an hour on a hike, unless you're into the trail running they call "trekking." On tough terrain, uphill and uneven, walking about a mile an hour is acceptable.

I'm not a trail veteran yet, but I can pass on some hints, including those learned the hard way. Take plenty of water or juice — one bottle isn't enough. You'll get thirsty and you'll get hungry. Carry a daypack. With that on your back, you'll feel like a real hiker, not an accidental walker, and the sweater, windbreaker, lunch, water, binoculars and camera in the pack can be welcome companions. If the summer day has bright sun, put a light, long sleeve shirt in the pack as a cover-up; if it looks stormy, you'll be glad you packed the rain poncho or rainsuit. A comfy hat is a must, whether rain or shine. I have become a fan of hiking in slacks with zip-off legs, so I can go from shorts to long pants easily, and vice versa, and have done so on many hikes as the weather changed.

I recently purchased a better daypack, one that has some rigidity in its back structure, so it's not a sagging pouch drooping from my shoulders. This model also has a hip belt and chest strap, to carry weight comfortably. I have made many short hikes, though, with a belt pack that has carriers for two water bottles and a central zip pouch for a little gear, including a map.

A trail map is indispensable. We're talking travel here. Few of us would go driving in a strange city without a map, making random turns with no way of knowing how to get back. Your legs can run out of "gas," too, if you go the wrong way at a trail turning (which, by tradition, is marked with double blazes).

There are many sources for trail maps, including from trail organizations such as the Appalachian or North Country Scenic Trail. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has maps to trails on state forests and state parks; the Allegheny National Forest can supply you with information on trails on those half-million-plus acres. Two of my favorite book series for day hikes are Marcia Bonta's two *Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania* volumes; and Tom Thwaites's three *50 Hikes in . . .* books, which spotlight western, central and eastern Pennsylvania. Whatever map or book guide you choose, carry a compass, too, and a little flashlight in case you do get back late.

Black Forest. Susquehannock. Tanbark. Thousand Steps. Conestoga. Tuscarora. Donut Hole. Laurel Ridge. Loyalsock. Lost Turkey. Even the names of some of Pennsylvania's best known hiking trails sound like reasons to go and see what they are about. Call it exercise, call it game scouting, call it the call of what lies beyond the next hill, but why not try a real trail hike this summer? □

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Mast condition surveys as well as timber sales keep me busy this month, and the food and cover crews concentrate on repairing roads, shooting ranges and parking areas on game lands for the upcoming hunting seasons.

AUGUST is the height of summer and usually the hottest month. We don't find many people in the woods this month; the annoying insects and humid weather seem to keep them in cooler places. Most wild animals also try to escape the heat and bugs. They rest in shady places during the day and begin to stir only as the sun retreats below the horizon. Bears spend a lot of time near creeks and places they can wallow, and it's evident that deer are annoyed with the flies and a host of biting, bothersome insects.

Goldenrod, asters, jewelweed and many other wildflowers bloom in August. One of my favorites this time of year is the New England aster. This flower can be found in road ditches and wet meadows across the state. It blooms in various shades of purple, and it really adds some color and beauty to our area this month. It's quite common along the dirt roads in Clarion County.

Week One

I'm on vacation this week, and because the mowing season is over, the crews get a chance to catch up. The only mowing we do now is on public shooting ranges, cemeteries located on game lands, and around our buildings. All our trucks and tractors need to be serviced and the mowers cleaned for storage. We generally put off any major mower repairs, such as welding and blade sharpening until hunting season, when we try to keep the crews out of the woods. Everett, Gary, and their crews do a good job of getting our tractors in top shape, before we get into the second planting season. Gary's roller ramp truck is having some engine problems, so he arranges to get it into the garage for an estimate of repairs.

The guys spend time repairing the roof on our storage building at SGL 72, cleaning up trash, and installing new backstops on the public shooting ranges. They also complete a couple of small painting jobs on our buildings and pick up some back ordered parts and supplies we need.

Week Two

The extremely dry weather enables Gary and his crew to make some repairs to a wetland impoundment on SGL 72. This impoundment has been losing water and is almost completely dry. We are able to haul loads of clay from an adjacent area and cover the bottom of the impoundment where we think the water is seeping down into the ground. Gary, Tom and Willard work on this project most of the week, hoping to finish it before the predicted rain comes. I assist them for a couple of days, and we finish early, but the rain never comes.

I attend a timber showing for prospective bidders on a sale area located on SGL 54, and then travel north to SGL 283 to meet with timber operators working on a sale there. Our foresters do an exceptional job with the timber harvest program, but I

still try to keep on top of the progress in these areas.

Gary tells me that the Clarion County roller ramp truck needs extensive engine work and will be expensive to fix. I contact Federal Aid Supervisor Pat Anderson at the Northwest Region Office, and we discuss our options. We decide to get more quotes before getting it fixed.

This is also the time of year when LMOs and WCOs look at mast conditions in their areas. We generally review the same areas as in previous years, and with binoculars search out the tops of mast producing trees for visible signs of acorns, beechnuts, cherries, grapes, etc. My long time friend Sam Volpe will not be helping me this summer, as he passed away earlier in the year. Many times we would examine northern Jefferson County together and assess whether we would have a bumper crop or a poor one. Even though Sam was up in years, he had an eye for mast production. As I get into these same areas, I can't help but remember the times Sam and I did this together.

As I inspect the first area, it doesn't take long to realize we will have a bumper crop of hard and soft mast this year. This crop will allow most species of wildlife to go into the winter in good physical condition, but may cause the bears to den late this year, which will increase the bear harvest. Having this much good mast may also impact the archery and turkey hunters. Wildlife will not have to travel as far or be limited to a few concentrated areas of preferred food sources.



SAM VOLPE, a very active deputy for many years, had an eye for evaluating mast conditions during our summer mast survey in Jefferson County. LMOs search the tops of mast producing trees each year to determine what type of crop there will be.

Week Three

I spend some time taking soil samples from plots we intend to re-seed in the spring. These samples will tell us how much lime and fertilizer is required to grow the type of crops we intend to plant. When we developed our annual work plans earlier in the year, we decided which game lands food plots were due for re-seeding in the upcoming season. This is also the time of year we apply lime to food plots we sampled in the spring.

With the ground dry and hard right now, the heavy lime truck can get to many food plots that are impossible to get to in the spring. This is also the time of year when demand for trucks is low, so we can get the lime applied without having to wait for an available truck. Due to budget constraints, we are not able to lime every food plot as often as it is needed, so we have to prioritize the plots after we receive the soil sample results. This year we will be able to lime 35 acres of food plots in each county of my group. Liming helps to "sweeten" the soil and is very important for growing and sustaining crops. I have seen a difference in wildlife usage of limed or high pH food plots compared to unlimed food plots with a low pH. When sportsmen's clubs ask what they can donate to help wildlife, I usually tell them lime and fertilizer. These two items have a big impact on sustaining quality food plots on our game lands.

While driving through SGL 54, I see a black bear wallowing in some standing

water created from culvert runoff. Dave Miller made this little "frog pond" when he was cleaning culverts with a backhoe. The bear appears a little nervous as I stop to watch him get relief from the heat and insects. Lying on his back with his large belly exposed and feet in the air, he reminds me of a friend of mine in a hot tub. After a few minutes he crawls out and trots into the brush.



CONTROL DEVICES such as this help prevent beavers from clogging culverts, but they require periodic maintenance.

I meet with Bob Bauer and we complete an inspection of two timber sale areas in Jefferson County. This inspection is done after the timber operator has completed all logging and cleanup work. We inspect road grading, ditching, seeding, skid trails, stoning, culverts, treetop placement, as well as verify that correct and complete blocks were cut, and for compliance of items listed in the sale contract. If the site passes this final inspection, the monetary bonds we are holding will be released back to the timber operator. If the site does not pass, an on-site meeting is set up with the timber operator to discuss the work he must complete. In this case, both sites passed our final inspection.

As Gary and Everett are coordinating delivery and spreading of lime in their respective counties, the rest of the crews are performing normal maintenance tasks on game lands. These tasks consist of repairing and painting gates, staining wooden signs, grading parking lots, and starting to replace the many missing signs, all in preparation for the upcoming hunting seasons.

I spend the rest of the week working on project proposals to be submitted to the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Safari Club and other conservation organizations. These groups provide funding to help us accomplish habitat work on game lands. This funding will help us to complete habitat projects beyond what our budget and manpower will permit us to do. A lot of wildlife habitat work is accomplished across the state through the help of these organizations.

A couple of projects I'm working on to submit this year will include: cost estimates for additional lime and fertilizer for our food plots; the pruning of 200 apple trees found on game lands; and grouse habitat development through a series of aspen patch cuts in a new grouse area. These proposals must include cost estimates, maps, and a typed narrative of the work to be performed and habitat objectives we hope to accomplish. The added legwork and paperwork involved is a small price to pay for the increased habitat improvements we achieve through these programs.

As I'm one of the region's firearm instructors, Saturday is spent at our annual summer shoot. I meet fellow instructor WCO Dave Donachy at the range on SGL 54 near Brockway. We set up the range and greet the 50 or so salaried and deputy officers who are attending this training. Our summer training involves firearm inspections, classroom lectures, videos, policy updates and refreshers, as well as range

training and qualification with the handgun and police shotgun. We practice shooting and reloading, participate in stress and judgmental scenarios, and must pass a timed and scored qualification test. We must also shoot at various stages of low light and darkness. Our agency is very thorough and strict on training requirements.

Our people must pass these and other standards set by our training division if they are to continue as law enforcement officers. Game Commission officers are some of the best trained law enforcement officers in the state. It's this commitment to training from our deputy force that encourages the salaried officers to do a better job of providing protection of our natural resources. The firearms training concludes around 11:15 p.m., and after cleanup we are out around midnight.

Week Four

The crews finish grading access roads and cleaning culverts, while Dave Miller and Willard Kline start plowing food plots for our second planting season. Within the next month we will plant approximately 20 to 25 acres of wheat or rye for wildlife in each county, which in turn will be frost-seeded to a legume/grass mix in the spring.

I'm inspecting access roads on our game lands, looking for places suitable for physically challenged hunters to use ATVs on. Our agency hopes to develop one such site in each county. It's my job to submit a recommendation as to where we could locate these within my group. This is not as easy as it might appear. I must take into account parking areas large enough for vehicles and trailers, level and solid road surfaces, pull off spots along the roads and good hunting areas. Although many of us dislike the use of ATVs on game lands, this is and exception that will provide deserving hunters a way to continue to enjoy hunting.

Farm-Game managers Tom Deitz and Lee Jordan increase their landowner contacts, replace missing signs, deliver seedling orders, review areas to be border cut next winter, and formulate ideas to help hunters and landowners with small habitat projects on these public access lands. It's because of the generosity of many private landowners, and efforts of farm game managers and deputy WCOs, that sportsmen across the state are able to enjoy the many hunting and trapping opportunities provided on private land.

This week also finds me inspecting a previously stripmined area on SGL 195 for a coal company bond release. I will inspect items such as acid mine drainage, land contours, erosion, seeding, topsoil placement and tree seedling survival. I will then make a report with a recommendation as to whether I feel a bond should be released back to the coal company. In this case, as I walk over the site, I have some erosion and topsoil concerns. Along with my report, I also type up a memo requesting that two water impoundments not be removed. The water found in these impoundments will benefit many species of wildlife in the future.

Everett, Dave and I work at cleaning and re-setting some beaver control devices at one of our wetland impoundments on SGL 54. The beavers have clogged the overflow culverts and built a dam across the emergency spillway. I'm concerned that this will cause the earthen dam to be breached if we have any heavy rain. We bring in a small dozer, a backhoe, and our potato hooks to try and take back control of the impoundment. After a lot of effort we get the water level down and flowing properly. Everett and Dave will have to return to complete the seeding and mulching, and I will be back in a few days to check the site. I'm willing to bet, however, that we will have to fight this battle again prior to trapping season.

The end of the month brings our regular monthly reports and the monthly meeting with foremen Gary Maxwell and Everett Reitz, to discuss work progress and set priorities for September. The summer is sure flying by. □

Often vulnerable to road construction projects, shale barren outcroppings are important for growing some of Pennsylvania's most interesting and rarest plant species.

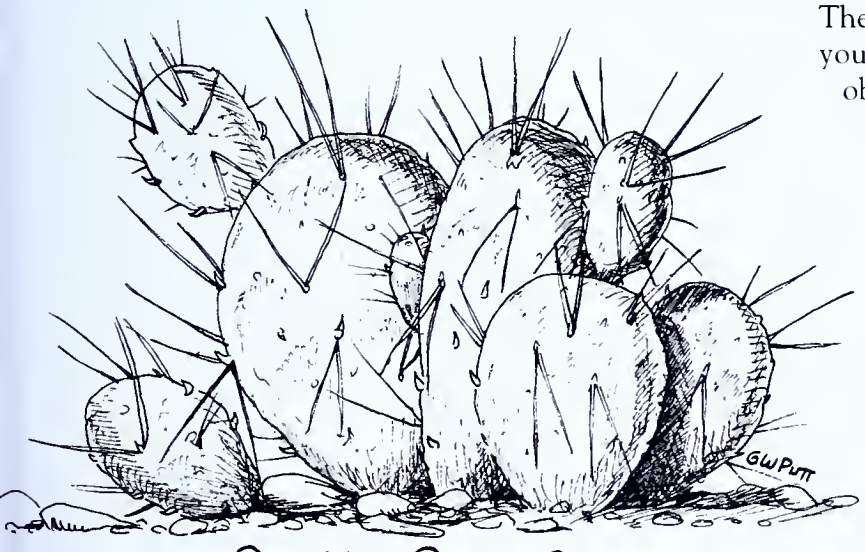
"Continental Habitat Islands"

BOB GRUVER held the small snake by the back of its head as we gathered around to look. The owner of the shale barren we were exploring, John Cantrell, was aghast.

"That's a copperhead," he said.

"No, no," Gruver answered. "Look at the turned-up snout. This is a young hognose snake."

The rest of us agreed and explained to Cantrell that the snakes he had been killing over the years were not copperheads but harmless, and increasingly scarce, hognose snakes. Denizens of dry soil, which they use their snouts to bury into, they are also known as "spreadheads," "blowing vipers," and "puff adders" because of their peculiar manner of defense. As my husband Bruce described it to Cantrell, when they are threatened, they inflate their bodies with air, flatten their heads and necks and hiss as they expel air or writhe and twist, rub their mouths against the ground and finally roll over and play dead, their mouths open and tongues hanging out.



~ Prickly Pear Cactus ~

Then we found a second young hognose, which obligingly flattened its head. As he watched, Cantrell made up his mind.

"I'll never kill those snakes again," he promised.

Were we participating in a herp count that overcast day in late August? Absolutely not! We were members of

a Native Plant Society field trip to shale barrens in Huntingdon and Fulton counties. Led by Dr. Carl Keener, retired Penn State botanist and authority on the mid-Applachian shale barrens, our first stop, along a winding back country road near Three Springs in southern Huntingdon County, was to see one of the few remaining stands of the Pennsylvania-threatened plant, the shale-barren evening-primrose (*Oenothera argillicola*). Keener pointed out the reddish stems and larger, showier yellow blossoms that distinguish this species from common evening primrose (*O. biennis*).

"A plant to treasure," Keener told us, "an old species and rare." Cameras clicked as we admired many beautiful specimens in full bloom.

Because this shale barren is on private land, we were walking along the edge of the road and looking up at the barren, which stretched enticingly over the hill. That was when Cantrell appeared, to find out why so many cars were parked along the little-traveled back road and so many people were peering intently at what, to him, was extremely infertile land so dry that it was covered with the Pennsylvania-rare plant, prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*).

He had recognized how unusual it was to have cacti on his property, but he had not known that the shale-barrens evening-primrose was also rare. His goats had been eating it, he told us. But once he learned about the rarity, not only of the plants but the shale barren habitat they grow on, he proudly showed us the full extent of it. We spent a happy hour on both sides of the road, up the hill and down to Aughwick Creek, admiring a host of interesting plants as well as the hognose snakes.

One of approximately 200 hot, dry, shale outcroppings that extend from Huntingdon, Mifflin, Franklin, Perry, Bedford and Fulton counties in southcentral Pennsylvania through the panhandle of western Maryland, all of eastern West Virginia, and into southwestern Virginia, it consists of hard Devonian shale that breaks off to form talus. Because shale barrens occur mostly on south-facing slopes, surface temperatures can reach as high as 150 degrees Fahrenheit. This heat effectively burns off most seeds that try to sprout, setting the stage for the few plants able to withstand the rigorous conditions, those plants that Keener calls "obligate heliophytes" which means "dependent on sunlight." They also have extensive root systems to take advantage of whatever moisture penetrates the rocky soil.

Although botanists have identified 97 species and varieties of plants that grow on shale barrens, the endemic plants (those found only on shale barrens) are the most interesting and often the rarest. According to Keener, shale barrens host 18 plants that are endemics. In Pennsylvania, these "continental habitat islands," as Keener calls them, have eight of these plants: Kate's mountain clover, Harris' goldenrod, forked chickweed (the only annual shale barren endemic plant), mountain pimpernel, shale barren dwarf bindweed or low bindweed, cat's-paw ragwort, shale barren pussy-toes, and shale-barren evening-primrose. Although each barren has its own suite of plants, only a few dozen barrens throughout the Appalachians are rich in flower species.

Cantrell's barren specializes not only in shale-barren evening-primrose and prickly-pear cactus, but also forked chickweed or shale barrens whitlowwort (*Paronychia montana*), a wiry member of the Chickweed family. Keener pointed out still other plants there that adapt well to the hot, dry habitat: long-leaved houstonia or summer bluet (*Houstonia longifolia*), and bracted plantain(*Plantago aristata*), a native plant that lives on roadsides and waste places.

Many shale barren outcroppings, like Cantrell's, are along roads or on hillside land with thin soils and are considered worthless land, so they are often destroyed by road work. One example is the construc-

tion of U.S. Route 322 from State College to Harrisburg which obliterated a shale-barren evening-primrose site, Keener says. But we felt confident, when we said goodbye to Cantrell, that this was one site that would now be valued by its owner.

Other threats to shale barrens are shale quarrying, grazing and browsing by deer and livestock, and dam building. The most egregious of the latter is the Raystown Dam, built and owned by the Army Corps of Engineers in Huntingdon County, which drowned a substantial portion of the largest concentration of Pennsylvania shale barrens. Today, the surviving upper slopes still host a population of shale-barren evening-primrose, which is best seen by boat.

At our other stop, along U.S. Route 30 near Harrisonville in Fulton County, the road workers had been there ahead of us. Keener ranged up and down the side of the busy highway, looking slightly bewildered as he tried to get his bearings. He had last been there 25 years ago, and the site didn't look the same to him.

After some poking around, though, he found remnants of what had once been a large population of the Pennsylvania endangered cat's-paw ragwort (*Senecio antennariifolius*). Although its bright yellow flower heads had faded, its crowded rosette of leaves distinguished it from other plants. That rosette grows close to the ground to protect it from the drying wind and intense heat reflected from the shale. In addition, its upper leaf surfaces are whitened to reflect the heat and a covering of dense hairs on the lower leaf surfaces also serve to insulate the plant. Altogether, it is a wildflower elegantly designed to live in its specialized habitat.

As we were contemplating what were obviously fresh excavations in the area, a man in a pickup truck drove up. Like Cantrell, he wondered what we were looking at. When we told him, he said that he and his wife had tried to protect the area. But it was private property and a neighbor, who lives across the road from the shale barren, had wanted a better view before pulling off the highway, so part of the hill had been cut away to oblige him.

All the while we talked and looked for plants, cars and trucks whizzed past, and I thought with longing and gratitude for the remote Sideling Hill Creek Natural Area in southwestern Fulton County, owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. It, too, is a refuge for cat's-paw ragwort. The shale barren itself is a 50-acre tract that is part of the larger 136-acre natural area. The natural area is part of one of the most pristine and ecologically significant areas in central Appalachia, Sideling Hill Creek.

Much of the land bordering the creek in both Pennsylvania and Maryland is in private hands and contains numerous shale barrens that support several rare plants and moths. The creek, itself, shelters the state-endangered Tennessee pondweed (*Potamogeton tennessesnis*), two rare mussels, a rare fish (the Potomac sculpin), the



~Hognose Snake~

rare wildflower golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*) and an unusual freshwater sponge (*Spongilla lacustros*).

On the natural area barren, there are four species of rare moths, including the Packard's lichen moth (*Cisthene packardii*) and five rare plants. In addition to cat's-paw ragwort, there is an excellent population of the Pennsylvania-rare Allegheny stonecrop (*Sedum telephoides*), also known as "wild live-forever" and "American orpine." Like its close relative, the garden plant European stonecrop, its leaves are succulent. Although the plant has flat-topped clusters of white-to-dark pink flowers in August and September, its pale, reddish-tinged, gray-green leaves make it easy to identify throughout the season.

Other rare plants include small-flowered crowfoot, Allegheny plum, dwarf spirea, and another shale barren endemic, the Pennsylvania endangered Harris' or leather-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago arguta var. harrisii*), the earliest and longest-blooming of the goldenrods, which often opens in May. Other Sideling Hill Creek barrens shelter Pennsylvania rare shale-barren pussytoes (*Antennaria virginica*), Pennsylvania endangered mountain pimpernel (*Taenidia montana*), and Pennsylvania-endangered Kate's mountain clover (*Trifolium virginicum*).

It was the discovery of Kate's mountain clover back in 1892 by botanist John Kunkel Small that first focused attention on the shale barren habitat. He was exploring Kate's Mountain in southeastern West Virginia when he emerged from a dry forest on to a steep slope covered with loose shale. Amid the scraggly trees and sparse vegetation, he spotted a new plant with thin, cloverlike leaflets and round, white, cloverlike flowers that he named Kate's mountain clover. Even today, Kate's Mountain remains the type locality for most of the endemic species, along with another shale barren in Bath County, Virginia.

In Pennsylvania, Kate's mountain clover or shale-barren clover is found in Bedford, Fulton and Franklin counties. Altogether it is distributed unevenly at 54 sites, most of which are in the northern half of the shale barren region. It's the least abundant of all the endemics, with often less than a dozen plants on a barren.

In 1911 botanist Edward Steele called the steep, rocky habitat a shale barren. Another botanist, Robert Platt of Emory University described shale barrens' soil as "brownish-yellow" and "covered with a thin mantle of flattish and variously sized weather resistant rock fragments." Further study of barrens' soil by Platt revealed eight to 10 inches of normal soil sandwiched between the rocky surface and fractured rock beneath. Platt also found that of 35,000 seedlings on a shale barren in April, only nine had survived by June. Furthermore, the few trees growing on a barren were badly stunted, for instance, a 300-year-old juniper was 15 feet tall and a 108-year-old oak six feet tall.

Shale barrens continue to fascinate scientists, and both the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program are conducting ongoing inventories of the flora and fauna of Sideling Hill Creek's aquatic and shale barrens' habitats. Thankfully, the Sideling Hill Creek Natural Area's barren should be safe from road building, dam building, and other indignities, and remain a source of knowledge and inspiration for both scientists and interested laypersons.

As Keener so aptly expressed it in the conclusion to his definitive paper, "Distribution and Biohistory of the Endemic Flora of the Mid-Appalachian Shale Barrens," Hidden away on the Appalachian shale barrens are partial clues to unravelling the complicated history of the eastern Appalachian forest, and it would be tragic if members of *Homo sapiens L.*, a destructive (and potentially self-destructive) species recently on the scene, wantonly destroyed remnants of far more ancient population systems." □

By P.J. Reilly

A lot of preparation leads up to it but, when it comes right down to it, the most crucial part of bowhunting is . . .

Taking the Shot



THE BUCK was moving toward me at a good clip when I first spotted him walking along the ridge behind my treestand. His gait steady and determined, I knew it would be only a matter of seconds before he'd be within bow range.

It was 1998, early November — rutting season — and this buck was showing all the telltale signs. His neck was swollen and his antlers were broken, no doubt from fights over territory and hot does. The buck's left beam was intact, but all the points were gone. The right beam jutted out of his head about four inches before it came to a jagged, abrupt end.

I didn't care about the broken rack. This buck would be a confidence builder. After missing two bucks earlier in the season due to stupid mistakes on my part, I needed to reassure myself that I still had what it takes to bag a deer with a bow. I was going to think this whole situation through to the end, to avoid repeating any of my earlier miscues.

Bowhunters spend a great deal of time in the woods each fall, scouting, hanging treestands, making mock scrapes, etc. They spend hours and hours in their stands during the season, waiting for North America's premiere trophy — the whitetail — to approach within range of their bows. And after all that, it comes down to taking the shot. This is the most crucial moment in the hunt. This is the moment when it's determined whether a hunter will soon be filling out a tag, going home with a banged-up arrow that has no hair or blood on it, or spending the next several hours tracking an animal that's been poorly hit.

The shot is not only the most crucial part in the hunt, it's also the most exciting. This is the moment the hunter has worked for all year. His heart starts pumping the moment he spots the deer. It beats harder and harder the closer the deer comes. Sweat begins to form on palms and temples. It doesn't matter if it's two degrees outside. When a deer is close, the hunter's hands begin to sweat. His breathing is la-

bored, coming in short, erratic gasps that never seem to deliver enough oxygen to the lungs.

Let's face it. The moment of truth in the deer woods brings on a strong physical reaction. In any other environment, the hunter might think he's having a heart attack or a bad reaction to something he ate for dinner. You can't prepare physically for this condition on the target range, but you can mentally prepare for it. If you don't, plan on taking home that banged up arrow or tracking a wounded animal for quite some time.



ANCHORING the bowstring in the same spot on your cheek each time you shoot becomes automatic after repetitive practice. Once you're at full draw, find a small tuft of hair or other aiming spot in the deer's vital area to ensure pinpoint accuracy.

The simple truth is, shooting an arrow at a deer is no different than shooting at a paper plate, a bullseye target, a 3-D foam deer, or any other type of target you've used on the practice range. Shooting is shooting. That's the mindset you have to take into the deer woods with you. Make the act of shooting a deer a technical project that requires focus, concentration and attention to detail. Don't think of it as one of the most challenging tasks hunting has to offer. Thinking like that will certainly sink you.

Making a killing shot with a bow from your treestand begins on the practice range. Shoot as much as you can. I'm not talking about shooting as much as you can the month before the season opens. I'm talking about shooting as much as you can all year long. Archery is a popular game these days. You should have no trouble finding leagues that shoot all year long.

The more you shoot, the more your body becomes accustomed to shooting. What does that mean? Well, repetitive shooting trains your muscles and your mind to work in unison to produce a good shot. Over time, the act of good shooting becomes automatic. You'll know what "feels" right when you draw the bow, what doesn't, and how to adjust accordingly. Archers who don't shoot often never develop that sense of feel that is vital in the woods.

During the 1998 archery season, I missed a buck on the opening morning because I rushed the shot. The deer was walking, and rather than whistle at him to try to make him stop, I drew and shot without ever getting into my comfort zone. For me, the comfort zone is a feeling that washes over me when I'm at full draw, with my bow arm steady and my string hand locked into position along my cheekbone by my thumb, which is anchored behind my neck. After a few seconds in that position, something inside my brain tells my body that I'm ready to aim and shoot. And if I can get into that comfort zone, the deer I'm aiming at is usually in serious trouble.

Two weeks after my first mishap in 1998, I had an encounter with another buck. This time, I never realized my wrist strap wasn't fastened properly until I went to draw. Seeing the strap hanging free rattled me. I fumbled to buckle it as the buck made a beeline toward my position on a scent trail I'd put down, but I couldn't get the job done in time. My mistake came when for that one shot I decided to change the shooting style I'd honed through years of practice. I don't grip the bow with my hand when I shoot, but rather, I leave my fingers spread open. My wrist strap keeps the bow from falling.

For this shot, I decided to grip the bow, rather than fool with the strap. Naturally, nothing about the shot felt right as I drew my bow and took aim. My mind and my body were locked in a war for control at that critical moment, and my mind ultimately won out. As I concentrated on my sight pin, my bow hand opened to its trained position, causing the bow to slip out of my hand, and the accompanying noise sent the buck scampering away.

Getting into your comfort zone when you're about to shoot a deer brings a sense of familiarity to an otherwise unsettling experience. Once your body feels comfortable at full draw, allow your mind to talk you through the shot. If it's a buck you're about to shoot, don't become mesmerized by his antlers. That can throw your whole system out of whack. Focus on your sight pin, and find that vital spot behind the deer's shoulder. If you're in an elevated stand, you need to think about how the height is going to affect your shot. Generally, you should aim higher on the deer's body, and it's essential to hit the deer higher on the body because the arrow will have a downward trajectory.

Finding an aiming point on a live deer and focusing on it is one of the most difficult challenges a bowhunter faces in the act of shooting. Your mind wants your eyes to look at the whole deer, rather than one tiny spot. But it's crucial to be specific about where you want your arrow to hit. If you don't pick a spot that's roughly the size of your sight pin, you'll find that your bow arm will wander, which is a bad thing. That leads to poor hits.

Think about your shooting form. When you're on the range you think about things like anchoring your string hand properly and following through with your shot. There's an old target archer's saying that goes, "If you want to see a bad shot, look at it." What this means is, if you move your head or your bow arm as soon as you release an arrow to see where the arrow's going to hit, you're going to cut short or alter your follow through and the arrow probably won't go where you wanted.

The rule of thumb is to keep your bow arm steady, your head locked on your sight pin, and keep your string hand moving away from the bow after the release until you hear the thud of the arrow hit. Then you can look. In all my years of bowhunting, I have never actually seen one of my arrows hit a deer. It happens too fast. I could probably get a glimpse if I moved my head at the shot, but I know that's poor shooting form.

So there I was, perched in my treestand at the end of the 1998 archery season, and the buck with the broken rack was coming my way. I told myself I was going to make absolutely certain I did everything right in taking my shot. The interesting part was that this buck was on exactly the same path as the one I had missed on opening day. And it also was walking. When the buck walked within bow range, I was already at full draw. This time I whistled at him when he hit an opening, and he stopped dead in his tracks. He even had his right front leg stretched out in front of his body, giving me a wide open shot at his vitals. I calmly directed the sight pin to a small tuft of white hair in the kill zone that attracted my eye. When the pin was locked in place, I pulled the trigger on my mechanical release, sending the arrow on its way.

I made sure to follow through with my string hand, and I held the bow in the shooting position well after the arrow was gone. In fact, the buck had already bolted before I put the bow down. The shot felt good, and I was certain the arrow had found its mark. When I saw the buck crash to the ground about 50 yards away, my shattered confidence was restored.

Shooting is shooting, whether you're on the range or in the deer woods. Shooting correctly in both places is a mental game. If you can control your emotions and concentrate on the technical aspects of shooting your bow, you can master the art of taking the killing shot. □

There are plenty of good woodchuck hunting outfits, but for my money I'll take the . . .

The .19 Calhoon BRNO



Helen Lewis

TIM LEWIS shows an instrumental velocity reading on the .19 Calhoon on a CED Millennium chronograph. Average for the 5-shot string was 3,305 fps. The scope on his rifle is a Springfield Tactical.

FROM THE MINUTE I saw the .19 Calhoon I liked it. The cartridge is simply a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber and fire-formed to a straight wall case with a 30-degree shoulder. Although the springboard for my woodchuck hunting career was a Hornet (Model 43 Winchester), and I enjoyed considerable success with it, I can't honestly say it impressed me.

When it appeared in 1930, the Hornet was heralded as a long-range varmint cartridge. To some extent it was. Its main competitors were the .22 Long Rifle and the .25-20 Winchester (WCF). The .22 Long Rifle had a muzzle velocity around 1,250 fps and the .25-20 WCF with a 60-grain bullet boasted muzzle velocities as high as 2,180 fps. With an 86-grain slug, muzzle velocity for the .25-20 WCF dropped to around 1,500 fps. Muzzle velocity for the early .22 Hornets was around 2,400 fps, and this was soon upgraded to a bit more than 2,600 fps. This was a significant increase over the Hornet's competitors, even though the .25-20 WCF cartridge was a favorite of varmint hunters in the gas light era.

With all the hoopla and adoration given the new entry, the .22 Hornet was not a true long-range varmint round. In all fairness to the Hornet, long-range field shooting was probably less than 200 yards. The .22 Long Rifle cartridge had an effective field range of less than 100 yards, and the

.25-20 WCF added only another 25 yards or so. Hornet admirers claimed their cartridge could easily reach 250 yards, but that was not true. A 40-grain 22-caliber bullet leaving the muzzle at more than 2,600 fps will topple a woodchuck, fox or prairie dog at 300 yards, but that doesn't mean that distance is its effective field range. Accurate bullet placement determines the effective field range, and the .22 Hornet is at its best under 200 yards.

Years back, I conducted a week long series of field tests to determine the effective shooting distances for the .22 Winchester Magnum and the 5mm Remington Magnum rimfire cartridges. I started by measuring off 75 yards from a series of dens in a creek bank. Both cartridges produced instant kills. I kept moving back in increments of 10 yards, and had no problems until I reached the 125-yard mark. From that point on I missed often, and the kill ratio fell dramatically. I stopped the tests at 165 yards, for both accuracy and energy reasons. I concluded that the two rimfire magnums' effective field shooting range was about 135 yards.

I'm sure many owners of either cartridge will dispute my figure as being low, but when accuracy and energy begin to wane, it's time to stop trying to reach out. Don't push a cartridge beyond its limits.

The .22 Hornet was unquestionably superior to the .22 Long Rifle and the .25-20 WCF, offering up to 1,100 more fps. This was a major selling point for the .22 Hornet. Although its noise level is mild compared to the .22-250 and .220 Swift, in the gas light era, the Hornet rang out with authority.

The Hornet had a strong competitor around 1938, when the .218 Bee came on the scene, and things really looked bad for the Hornet around 1940, when A. E. Mashburn improved the factory case and called it the .218 Mashburn Bee. Mashburn fire-formed the .218 Bee's factory case to a sharper shoulder angle that allowed a bit more powder and produced better ballistics The improved Bee offered the same muzzle velocity with a 55-grain bullet as the .22 Hornet did with a 45-grain bullet.

Also, the Mashburn .218 Bee had a much longer reloading life than the factory Bee or Hornet. If the Remington .222 had not entered the fray around 1950, the .22 Hornet may have been replaced by the Bee. Unfortunately for both old cartridges, the .222 sent them riding into the sunset.

While the .218 Bee is slightly superior to the .22 Hornet, it is a dying cartridge. The old Hornet, for some reason, has managed to survive, but it's losing ground. I've always believed that the Hornet case (the old Winchester centerfire black powder case) with its gentle shoulder angle did not hold enough powder for 224-caliber bullets weighing more than 40 grains. Most Hornet fans stuck with the 45-grain bullet, which could be pushed to more than 2,700 fps with a maximum powder charge, according to *Nosler's #4 Reloading Guide*.

Recently, several velocity tests were run through the new CED Millennium Chronograph with Sierra's 35-grain bullet. Muzzle velocity was slightly more than 3,000 fps. This is good news for Hornet shooters, but the new .19 Calhoon wildcat could give the old Hornet case new life.

The .19 Calhoon is the brainchild of bullet maker James Calhoon of Shambo Rt. 304, Havre, MT 59501. Mr. Calhoon sells several 19-caliber Re-barrel Kits. These include a match grade chambered barrel (must be threaded locally), a swaging/reloading Bonanza Forster die set, several brass brushes, 100 Calhoon bullets, and gunsmith instructions and loading data.

Removing the taper and sharpening the shoulder angle by fire-forming increases powder capacity just a little more than one grain. This might not sound significant, but in a small case, one grain does make a difference, especially behind a 27- or 32-grain bullet. The fire-formed Hornet case didn't increase the powder weight by much more than one grain, but it generated about 300 fps more muzzle velocity with certain pow-

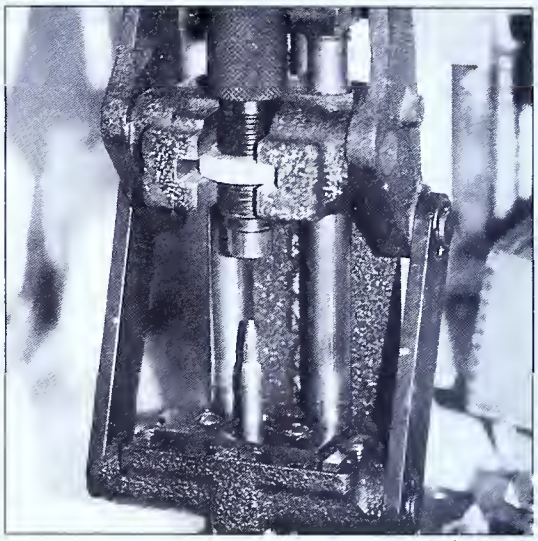
der charges behind a 45-grain bullet.

I haven't been able to obtain pressure readings or get ballistic coefficients for the .19 Calhoon, but the factory claims chamber pressures are in line with Hornet readings and ballistic coefficients are similar to .224 bullets.

I described in an earlier article about building a .19 Calhoon on a Remington 591 rifle chambered for Remington's 5mm Magnum. That might surprise some readers who know that the 5mm Magnum cartridge is a rimfire and the .22 Hornet is a centerfire. There's always someone who can build a better mousetrap. Dennis Olson, Box 334, 500 First St., Plains, MT 59859 has been converting Remington 581 and 591 rimfire bolts to centerfire since 1977. Both bolts have six locking lugs, which guarantees a tighter lockup. This should be good news to owners of the discontinued Remington 591, because factory cartridges are also no longer available. It might be possible to rebarrel the 591 to a .22 Winchester Rimfire Magnum, but there would not be any real gain over the 5mm Magnum. Rebarreling the 591 to a .19 Calhoon, however, will add 140 yards to the135-yard effective field range of either the 5mm Magnum or .22 Winchester Magnum.

The rimfires boast a muzzle velocity between 2,000 and 2,100 fps; the .19 Calhoon pushes a 27-grain 19-caliber bullet at better that 3,500 fps and a 32-grain at around 3,250 fps. That's an increase of 1,150 fps with the 32-grain bullet and 1,400 with the 27-grain slug, which will transform the Model 591 into a 250-yard woodchuck rifle.

After range testing the .19 Calhoon built on the 591 action, I decided to build one on a regular .22 Hornet action. I used a USA CZ BRNO .22 Hornet action. Small and compact, the BRNO is an ideal choice for the .19 Calhoon. Jim Peightal installed a match grade chambered barrel, and Lone Wolf Adventure Gear (125 N. Hilltop Rd., Columbia Falls, MT 59912) did a super job putting the barreled action in their thumbhole Howler stock.



Helen Lewis

LEWIS uses a Forster/Bonanza reloading press to crank out .19 Calhoon cartridges.

Robert Culbertson of Lone Wolf said the Howler Sporting stock was constructed using their epoxy and fiberglass/carbon fiber technology, and the action was bedded with their master class bedding system. It is finished with an epoxy texture coat in a light granite color. It's a sleek looking varmint rifle.

When using a repeating .22 Hornet action, the detachable magazine must be altered slightly to allow the larger case to come out of the magazine. (The fireformed case is larger in the shoulder area and won't come out of a regular Hornet clip.) The lips are opened slightly and some modification may have to be made inside the magazine, but according to Peightal, that's not much of a problem.

I topped the .19 Calhoon BRNO with a Springfield Armory 4-14x Tactical Government scope that incorporates a patented hands-free rangefinding reticle and an automatic bullet drop compensation for the 5.56mm (.223) match ammo up to 700 yards. Another nice feature is the bubble level in the scope, which is really helpful when shooting from the offhand position.

The old saying, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" could be rephrased

here with "The proof of a varmint rifle is in its accuracy." While the .19 Calhoon BRNO topped with the 4-14x scope looked good, its performance on the range would quickly reveal if all my efforts had been wasted.

I loaded 20 rounds of .19 Calhoon brass with 32-grain DBL HP bullets for my first range tests. CED Millinnium chronograph tests printed 3,305 instrumental velocity at nine feet, which would translate into approximately 3,325 fps true muzzle velocity.

I was almost finished sighting in when my son Tim arrived. I invited him to try his luck. He had seen the rifle, but had not fired it. After firing a couple of shots to get the feel of the trigger, Tim fired the first 3-shot group. It wasn't bad, but being somewhat more than an inch, it wasn't good, either. Tim's second group printed a one-holer. The third and fourth groups weren't one-holers, but they were well below an inch. The actual measurements using a Custom Products (Neil Jones) target measuring tool were: $1^{5}/_{32}$-inch; .220 thousandths of an inch; .550 thousandths of an inch; and .621 thousandths of an inch (625 thousandths is 5/8-inches).

These groups may not be near the one-hole class, but the .19 Calhoon BRNO is not a benchrest rig. It's a varmint rifle. Also, Tim was literally a stranger to the rifle. I'm convinced this rifle will shoot half inch 3-shot groups at 100 yards. That's top long-range varmint accuracy in anyone's book. I believe the .19 Calhoon might be more accurate at 250 yards than the Hornet is at 150. If true, it should be of great interest to Hornet fans, who will appreciate the higher velocities and longer ranges offered by the .19 Calhoon. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Elk Trivia

Copy the letter at the end of each true statement in the spaces below to see what it spells.

1. Bulls bugle mostly during September and October, the mating season. (W)
2. Cows are known to bark, grunt and may even bugle at times. (A)
3. Elk can weigh up to 1,000 pounds, making them larger than moose. (R)
4. Elk can run up to 60 miles an hour. (E)
5. A group of cow elk in the fall is called a harem. (P)
6. At birth, a calf weighs 30 pounds. (I)
7. Elk, because they are strong and muscular, can trot for miles. (T)
8. Elk have always been present in Pennsylvania. (S)
9. Elk are unable to swim and often drown. (M)
10. Elk are four times larger than deer. (I)

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ is the native American name for elk.

answers on p. 64

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Overall hunter success in North Dakota for white-tailed deer in 1999 was 62 percent — down from 64 percent in 1998. Mule deer buck success was up 17 percent, from 66 percent in 1998 to 83 percent last year.

According to the Medical Data Exchange, during a 4-year period in the 1980s, nearly 3,000 deaths and 900,000 head injuries resulted from bicycle accidents, many of them involving children. More children die from bicycle accidents than from poisonings, falls, and firearm injuries combined.

Seventy-four percent of active bowhunters first shot a bow before they were 20 years old, but the average age when today's bowhunter first hunted with a bow was 23 years, considerably older than the average age most people begin to hunt.

The Great Hinckley Hunt of December 24, 1818, was undoubtedly the best organized and most successful, large-scale hunt in Ohio history. Six hundred men and boys encircled the perimeter of the township and drove the woods, closing the circle. When the smoke cleared, 300 deer, 21 bears, 17 wolves, in addition to many turkeys, foxes and raccoons had been taken.

From July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999, 44,897 vehicle-killed deer were reported in Wisconsin, the second highest total on record. Car-deer collisions resulted in five human deaths and 746 injuries in 1998, according to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

A black bear believed to have severely injured a Boy Scout last August was shot and killed by a Wisconsin DNR officer after it approached another group of youngsters at the same camp two days later. DNR officials say they will continue to trap and move bears that become accustomed to contact with people in the camp area. Wisconsin has an estimated 14,000 bears.

Just two injuries occurred during New Hampshire's 1999 hunting season, making it the safest on record. Last season was the 7th consecutive season without a fatality, and the 6th consecutive year that the number of hunting incidents was fewer than 10. There are approximately 85,000 licensed hunters in New Hampshire.

Accidental firearms fatalities in Pennsylvania have declined by 37 percent since 1987, according to the National Safety Council. The state's decline has helped contribute to an overall national reduction in accidental fatalities, which are at their lowest level since record keeping began in 1903. Pennsylvania reported 22 fatalities in 1996, the most recent year for incident totals.

Hunters in West Virginia took 230,008 deer in 1999 — up 17 percent from the 195,840 taken in 1998.

Answers: 1. W, 2. A, 5. P, 6. I, 7. T, 10. I.
WAPITI



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For further information on participating in this program or to buy stamps, write the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or call 888-888-3459.

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GAME NEWS

Volume 71 ● No. 9
SEPTEMBER 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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NATIONAL HUNTING AND FISHING DAY

September 23, 2000

A Natural Invitation To Step Outside

THIS MARKS the 29th year sportsmen have celebrated National Hunting and Fishing Day. Pennsylvanians, however, can take pride in the fact that the idea for a special day of thanks for sportsmen originated right here, by Ira Joffe, owner of Joffe's Gun Shop in Upper Darby. In 1970, due to Joffe's efforts, Governor Raymond Shafer proclaimed an "Outdoor Sportsman's Day." The idea quickly caught on, and in the spring of '72, President Nixon signed the proclamation making official the first National Hunting and Fishing Day.

Specifically, NHF Day was established as the fourth Saturday in September, to recognize generations of hunters and anglers for the time and money they have donated to wildlife conservation programs. To date, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, sportsmen have provided more than $23 billion and uncounted hours of work on habitat improvement and other conservation projects. Over the years, NHF Day has been celebrated with thousands of special events organized by sportsmen's clubs, conservation groups and state wildlife agencies — together introducing many millions of Americans to hunting and fishing, while highlighting their vital role in conservation.

Over the years, NHF Day has served for hunters and fishermen to showcase and celebrate what they've accomplished over the years.

Under the theme of "A Natural Invitation to Step Outside," this year sportsmen's clubs and other organizations are encouraged to provide hands-on opportunities for people of all ages to experience archery, riflery, muzzleloader shooting, fishing, canoeing and just about every other outdoor activity.

Spokesman for this year's NHF Day is NASCAR driver Ward Burton. Among Burton's outdoor accomplishments, he is founder of the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, through which lands are acquired for public hunting, fishing and trapping.

Watch for NHF Day activities in your area. Lend a hand, if you can, and by all means if you know of anybody who might like to take up hunting, shooting or any other outdoor activity, use this special day to let them experience what the outdoors has to offer. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

As a former resident of the Keystone State and a hunter/trapper for 25 years, I can attest to the fact that Pennsylvania has one of the least expensive hunting fees in the nation. My compliments to the Game Commission for their years of outstanding service.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank John and Sandi Becker for helping make possible my bear hunt.

M.S. Capparella,
Alamogordo, NM

Editor:

I really enjoyed your article, "What's in a Name," by Bob D'Angelo. It's a subject I've often wondered about.

E. Benvin,
Allegheny County

Editor:

For eight years the best experiences I had with my father was spending time with him during the hunting seasons. Since his untimely death, the last eight seasons have not been as enjoyable.

Now, however, I have a 2-year-old son who already loves to watch deer hunting videos and look at outdoor magazines with me. I can't wait until I can take him into Penn's Woods and pass on the same enjoyment that I had with my father.

C. Hopkins,
Beaver Falls

Editor:

Just finished reading the *Game News* and felt I had to let you know you have three authors I read consistently. Linda Steiner, Marcia Bonta and Bob Sopchick do an excellent job.

Keep up the good work.

M. Hosmer,
Warren

Editor:

We hope many Pennsylvanians follow through with Linda Steiner's suggestions in her June column, "Legacy." We have an excellent program to help the Game Commission acquire game lands, something we consider as pay back for all the great days spent enjoying Pennsylvania's wonderful wildlife resources.

A.& H. Buck,
San Diego, CA

Editor;

We presently subscribe to *Game News* and would like to change our mailing address. It would be nice to see a change of address form on the website or in the magazine.

To change an address, simply write Game News and include your account number, old and new address, and the date when you want the change to take effect.

We do not offer this service on our website, because we have no way of verifying if information submitted is legitimate.

Editor:

As a kestrel enthusiast, I happened to see your March issue at Hawk Mountain. I want to compliment your short story, "Potato Fires," by Bob Sopchick. Although I'm not a hunting supporter, or a Pennsylvanian, Mr. Sopchick's story was wonderful.

T. Lincoln,
Medford, MA

Editor:

George Block's "Both Sides Now" article hit the nail right on the head when it comes to selecting a Pennsylvania deer rifle. It seems to me that there's a tendency to "magnumtize" deer rifles, and that every year there are more big magnums on the range. It's scary how many hunters think power will make up for accuracy when it comes to putting down a deer.

For me, patience and shot placement are the rules for success.

R. Hayward,
Bethel Park

Editor:

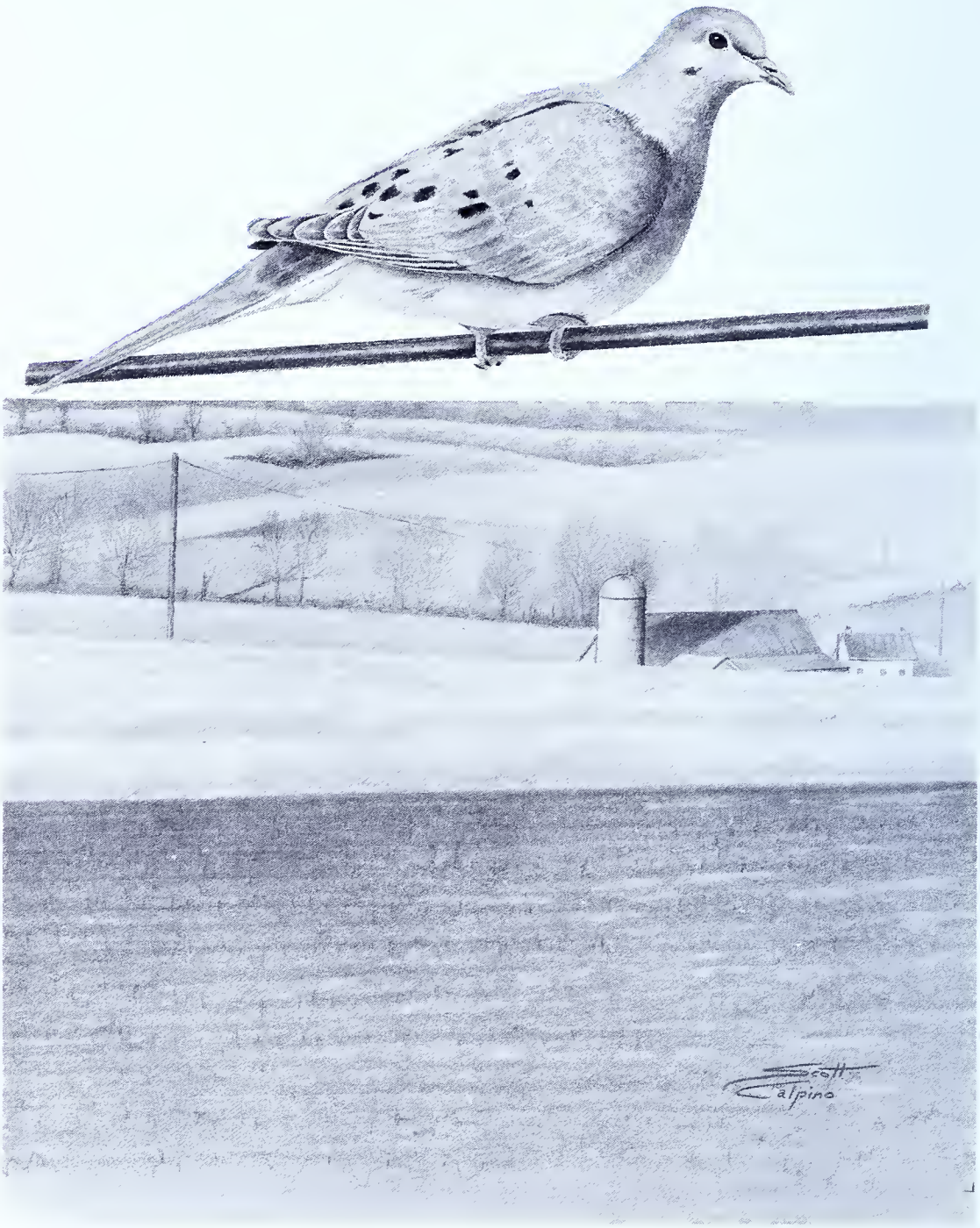
Have been reading *Game News* for many years, and especially enjoy the Field Notes. Nick Rosato deserves a big "Hoo-Ray" for his artistry, and the way he ties it in with the Field Notes.

E.N. Retzer,
Bradford

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

The Best Opening Day

By Jack Rodgers



HIGH SCHOOL can be a rough time for a kid. It's a period of increased responsibility, increased workloads, and increased exposure to peer pressure. Ever sit in a crowd and pretend to like the music, only to dial to something you enjoyed more the second you were alone? That's the power of peer pressure. And this struggle to fit in reaches other arenas besides music. It's upon these battlefields that fights over what type of sneakers you wear, length and style of jeans, and who you sit with at lunch are waged.

Back in the days when I attended Oley Valley High School in rural Berks County things were pretty much the same. Unfortunately for Don Hartman and me, we not only had to try to fit in with all the usual stuff, but also with hunting. Boy, were we in trouble there. You see, for Don and me the best opening day didn't involve a rifle, chalked turkey calls, or even, heretical as it sounded in a county where the rite-of-passage involved a ringneck's tailfeathers sprouting from a game vest, pheasants. Our favorite opening day was for doves.

It really is a shame that the standardized American view of "bigger is better" is applied to everything. It seems that there would be a lot less pressure and a lot more fun hunting if we cast off that attitude. Doves are a perfect example. While Don and I hunted other opening days, none brought the sheer unbridled "Huck Finn" kind of joy as September 1. And in many ways they still don't.

I don't know how much I learned in high school back then, but one thing I did learn was that doves have a lot of things going for them. First, there were just so darn many of them around. According to Rick Giovingo, a special agent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, doves nest three to four times a year. Many of these birds don't make it through their first season on the flyway, so liberal bag limits are placed on them. And you had to love that. I mean a kid could haul out a battered pump gun and shoot all day if he wanted to, or more likely, had to, given our wingshooting prowess. A kid who has just suffered through months of closed seasons wants to shoot, and no game species fits the bill for plenty of shooting better than the mourning dove.

Second, doves protected those fragile teenage egos because the world did not come crashing down if you missed. There was simply no pressure to succeed in our dove hunting as there was in other types of hunting. After all, failing to connect on a ringneck barreling out of a cornfield in front of a group was not exactly a confidence builder. And there was, and still is, unfortunately, an enormous amount of pressure to get your deer as if one was running around tagged with your name on it.

But doves? No, we expected to miss them and were not often disappointed. And frankly, unlike the organized dove shoots I experienced later down south and enjoyed less, no one noticed if we did. Slowly, though, our confidence and ability grew, and after a month in the dove fields Don and I both knew that few ringnecks would cackle past us unscathed.

I think the thing that was most appealing about doves, however, was that we had vast tracts of hunting land to ourselves. In the local sportsman's hierarchy, doves fell several rungs below squirrels. No one except those "two fool kids" knocked on farmers' doors to hunt doves. Through the generosity of Pennsylvania farmers, we had plenty of land to hunt. Truth was, sometimes the hardest part about getting permission to hunt doves was convincing a farmer that he had doves on his property, or even explaining what one was.

I remember one dairy farm in particular. It was located between two Tioga County hills. This was big game

country, filled with whitetails, gobblers and bruins. I was a freshman in college then and scouting for a place to hunt grouse. There was a dirt road along a lake, and the farmer had recently cut his corn for silage. Gravel. Grain. Water. All of those "dove tumblers" clicked, and I knew doves had to be around. And they were. Flocks of the migrating speedsters whistled around the cornfield. I had packed some boxes of number 8s, so I wheeled my rickety pickup into the driveway.

The farmer cautiously emerged from his milking barn. He wore the no nonsense look of a survivor of many northern Pennsylvania winters. I tentatively introduced myself, and asked about the doves.

"Doves?" he asked. "What's a dove?"

Just then a dove fluttered tauntingly to rest on a wire right over our heads.

"That's one right there," I said.

Now you have to understand. This was a man to whom shooting a bird meant a 20-pound boss gobbler or a 12-pound Canada goose from the lake.



I can still see him now, just turning and staring in slackjawed amazement at the bird that was bobbing its head up and down. He looked at me a little differently when he turned around.

"What do you do with them?" he asked.

"Well, uh," I stammered, painfully aware of how this was going to sound to a man who had Angus beef cows the size of boxcars in his pasture, "you eat them."

He whipped around to look at the bird again, which spooked and twisted off the wire in one of those shot defying turns that dove hunters know all too well. The farmer laughed and shook his head. "Go ahead and get started," he said, smiling at the thought of the story he would tell at the next Grange meeting about the fool college kid. "You'll need a lot of those for supper."

And I got them, too.

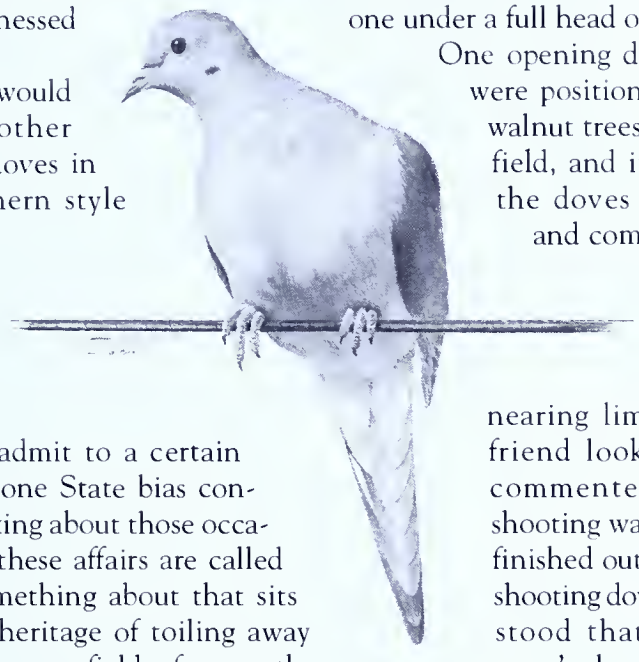
Evenings, we were told, was the best time to intercept these "silver comets" whipping around to feed or get gravel. Good advice, but not for us. We couldn't wait until the evening when any rational person would hunt. No sir, if the season opened at noon, and if the birds weren't flying, we'd simply walk 'em up. And it worked. Don and I flushed doves from cornfields, and it was exciting. The birds would whistle out of the still green crop and jet around like missiles. While the birds liked slightly cleaner fields than pheasants, they still preferred a smattering of foxtail or other weeds on their home turf. Don and I quickly learned that if we found a field with a smattering of foxtail, we'd find good dove hunting.

If you asked us then we'd say we preferred jump shooting because it was how we sharpened our wingshooting skills for the "big" events coming up, such as pheasant season. And, truth be told, years later there were days I got grouse or bobwhites that fell victim to shooting skills sharpened by jump shooting mourning doves in Berks County.

But that wasn't actually why we hunted at noon. There was an exultation at slid-

ing those first shells of the year into the gun and watching the minutes ticked away until noon.

Not all of the doves we felled rocketed out of cornfields. Don and I were lucky enough to gain permission to hunt in a stone quarry. Here the doves came in vast flocks to find gravel. I had never seen before, or since, the hordes of mourning doves in any one place as my friends and I witnessed in that quarry.



Later in life I would be invited to other states to shoot doves in the grand southern style over sunflowers. There were a lot of birds, of course, and it was easy shooting. Now I have to admit to a certain amount of Keystone State bias concerning my thinking about those occasions. After all, these affairs are called "shoots" and something about that sits wrong with my heritage of toiling away under those blazing cornfields of my youth. But regional prejudice aside, whenever I attended these social events, someone would comment on the amount of doves around. Invariably I would return to those teenage days when astonishing clouds of the birds winged overhead. I mean, there were unbelievable numbers of the speedsters in that stone quarry, and they came in at full speed.

It was in that quarry that Don and I learned important lessons. Restraint in the face of such numbers can be a hard pill to swallow when one has walked for doves. It didn't take long to find out that unless you had clear ground cover, attempts at doubles shouldn't be taken. We learned to take turns, shooting at one dove while the other spotted the fall or, more likely, theorized on the miss. Don and I lost very few birds this way. Sure, it took longer to reach a limit, but in Berks County in those days there were no shortage of birds.

Don and I soon learned to hunt near walnut trees. The trees often stood around the edges of the fields we hunted, and their often leafless limbs provided birds with a place to perch. It didn't take long for us to discover that a dove putting the brakes on to land was a lot easier to hit than one under a full head of steam.

One opening day Don and I were positioned under two walnut trees along a cornfield, and it seemed that the doves kept coming and coming, fluttering slowly as they tried to land. We were nearing limits when my friend looked over and commented that the shooting was too easy. We finished out the day jump shooting doves. We understood that day that it wasn't about how fast you could get your limit, or if you got a limit at all. And although we didn't know it then, as we got older we learned how precious and fleeting any time afield is.

That's what dove hunting is really about. The small buff-colored birds represent the little things that are really important in hunting. No one wears a T-shirt proclaiming, "I Got My Dove," or hunts them solely to put another mount in the den.

Dove hunting for me has been the glue that has held friendships together. This year Don's daughter, Alyssa, will be a new addition to our dove hunting team. And on September 1 she'll be out there at high noon to see for herself what dove hunting is all about. □

Lessons Learned the Hard Way

By Kenneth E. Dykes

PILED UP at the base of a tree, I lay gasping for air. One minute I was making my way down the mountain, and the next I was in a heap with the wind knocked out of me. Slowly, I began pulling myself together. I sat up, took some deep breaths and thought how lucky I was. As I took inventory, nothing seemed to be amiss. But then I noticed that my left leg was situated at a peculiar angle, one not normally associated with the structure of that particular lower limb.

The day had started uneventfully. I could hunt only until noon, as I had some errands to attend to. Having hunted opening day and the previous Saturday without seeing any bucks, I was anxious to put in as much time as possible on this, the last day of the '98 season. The previous night I had talked to a friend who told me that a nice buck was still wandering around on his farm. We discussed where I should stand, and I thanked him for the opportunity.



The next morning as I dressed I knew the temperature would be in the high 50s or 60s again, so heavy clothes were not required. In fact, I decided to forego my insulated hunting boots for an old pair of uninsulated ones with crepe soles. Putting them on that morning, I recall noticing that the soles were badly worn, and I made a mental note to have them repaired during the coming winter.

The trip to the farm turned out to be unproductive, so about eight o'clock I decided to head up to Bear Valley, where I knew groups would be driving deer. Driving to the top of Broad

Mountain, I parked my truck near the hunting camp of some friends, thinking it would be good to run into them sometime during the day, and perhaps we could work together to get a buck. I quickly grabbed my gear and headed down the mountain.

My goal was to get to the broad open flat about halfway down and set up on a stand. The mountainous terrain was steep and rocky with thick mountain laurel. Working my way down, I tried to avoid the dry leaves by stepping on rocks. And then I made a decision that would change my life forever.

The next rock in my path was almost covered with dry leaves, but I had already committed to stepping on it, and it was too late to change my mind. As I hit the rock my foot slipped. My momentum was already carrying me forward, but for a brief second I thought I could regain my balance. I soon realized, though, that I was going to fall, and there was nothing I could do about it. Instinct took over, and I remember dropping my rifle just before I began tumbling head over heels down the mountain. Somewhere in the somersaulting, I recall hearing a loud pop, but didn't associate it with anything of significance.

Finally coming to a stop about 30 feet from where I had started, I lay gasping for air and writhing around vaguely aware of a dull pain in my left knee. When I pulled up my pant leg I saw that my leg was slightly bruised, but no skin was broken. The position of the leg looked odd, to say the least, but I figured that I had probably just banged it up and could walk it off. Struggling to my feet, I tried to take a step and immediately collapsed. Now I felt pain. Looking at the leg again, I naively decided that I had probably just dislocated the knee.

The male ego is an interesting phenomenon. I'm 55 years old, but I'm in pretty good shape and blessed (or cursed, as it may be) with strong values of independence and rugged individualism. (John Wayne is still my hero.) I refused to believe that I couldn't get myself out of this predicament. I'd been in tough situations before and had always managed to come through relatively unscathed. This one would be no different, I thought. It would just take a little more effort.

Unable to walk, I decided to crawl back to the top of the mountain and my truck. After all, it couldn't be more than 300 yards. I first tried to crawl on all fours, but quickly discovered that that wasn't going to work. When I put any kind of pressure on the left knee, pain shot through my body like lightning bolts. I rested for a moment and thought that if I couldn't do it on all fours, I'd just pull myself backwards up the mountain, and eventually I'd get to my vehicle and then drive home. I worked my way back to where I had dropped my rifle. Taking a few minutes, I inspected it and was disappointed to see the dents in the scope and on the stock. I would definitely have to spend some time at the range, sighting it in again.

I unloaded the rifle, gathered myself, and then tried to pull myself up over those same rocks that I had just fallen over. The leg was swelling fast by this time. I found two sticks and took a safety strap out of my fanny pack and proceeded to make a crude splint. When I pulled myself along, it felt better. Resting for a minute, I looked back over my shoulder and tried to map out an easy route back up the mountain. It didn't look like there was going to be one, though. Considering the steep hillside, the rocks and the thick mountain laurel, this was going to be a major accomplishment. Slowly, and now painfully, I pulled myself along. It was dig in the right heel,

brace myself on my hands and push backward, gaining a few inches each time. Making little progress in an hour, the realization that I was in serious trouble began to sink in. I couldn't walk, the push and pull routine was producing minimal results, and the pain in the leg was getting worse. It was time to abandon personal heroics and attempt to get help. I thought about that universal distress signal — three rapidly fired shots, but concluded that approach probably wasn't going to result in anyone coming to see about me. This was the last day of buck season. The deer were being driven and would be moving right along. If a hunter saw a buck, it was more than likely that multiple shots would be fired. No one would think anything about it. So, as a last recourse, I began to shout for help. After what seemed an eternity but was actually only about a half hour, I heard a response.



"Where are you?"

Oh, how joy leaps in the soul when you hear that first acknowledgment to frantic pleas. I called again and the voice responded. Finally, after another 30 minutes or so, I saw two hunters making their way up the mountain. I continued to talk them in until they found me. Man, was I glad to see them.

We introduced ourselves and one of them asked me what was wrong. I told him I thought my leg was broken. In an authoritative way, he felt around my leg, noticing the sizable swelling in the knee area. (I found out later that he was a volunteer fireman.)

By this time, two other men had arrived and we began to discuss how we were going to get me to the top of the mountain. One suggested that they go find a phone and call 911. They could get an ambulance and a trained crew up to the top of the mountain. I convinced them that this could take forever, and that if they would just help me, I believed we could make it out ourselves much more quickly. I was still convinced that I could drive home, or to the hospital, if need be, if I could just get to my truck. They finally agreed and we worked out a plan.

Gary Keown and Joel Stonesifer agreed to help carry me while Tim Reid and Jim Lyons carried my gun and gear and broke a trail ahead of us. I wrapped an arm around each of their necks, and then they proceeded to help walk me back up through the rocks and mountain laurel, stopping frequently to rest. It took us an hour to make the trek up the mountain (compared to the 10 or 15 minutes it had taken me to cover the same distance coming down). Finally arriving at the road on top of Broad Mountain, they eased me down and went to retrieve my truck. Getting me into the vehicle was another painful ordeal, but finally I was sitting in the passenger seat with Gary driving. Joel was in the back and Tim and Jim followed in their vehicle. It was 20 minutes or so to my house, where Gary informed my wife as to my condi-

tion. I thanked them all profusely and wished them good hunting for the remainder of the day.

Arriving at the Chambersburg Hospital emergency room, I was wheeled in and almost immediately taken to x-ray, where my "dislocated knee" turned out to be a major multiple fracture of the upper tibia. Pins and bone grafts were required to put it back together again, followed by six weeks in a cast.

Lying on one's back. Almost totally immobilized, provides a lot of time for reflection and personal evaluation. I went back over the events of that day, several times thinking about what I had done and what I could have done. I knew that I had ignored lessons that I had taught my two sons when they became old enough to hunt. In short, I failed to heed my own advice and counsel. Here's what I had done wrong:

Lesson No. 1.

Haste makes waste. From the time I was a little boy I had heard this old saying. It was certainly true in this case. Had I not been so intent on getting to my stand in a hurry, I might not have tried to traverse the treacherous rocks so quickly. More importantly, I would have recognized that I should have been looking for a less hazardous path down the mountain in the first place. While I do not consider myself as "old" and still have a great deal of agility and strength, I should have considered the possible consequences of this high risk decision to try to tiptoe from rock to rock.

Lesson No. 2.

Make sure someone knows where you are hunting. My wife knew I was going to my friend's farm, but she had no way of knowing that I had changed locations. In other circumstances, I could have lain on the side of the mountain for hours before anyone found me. I was extremely fortunate to encounter those four Good Samaritans who went out of their way to help.

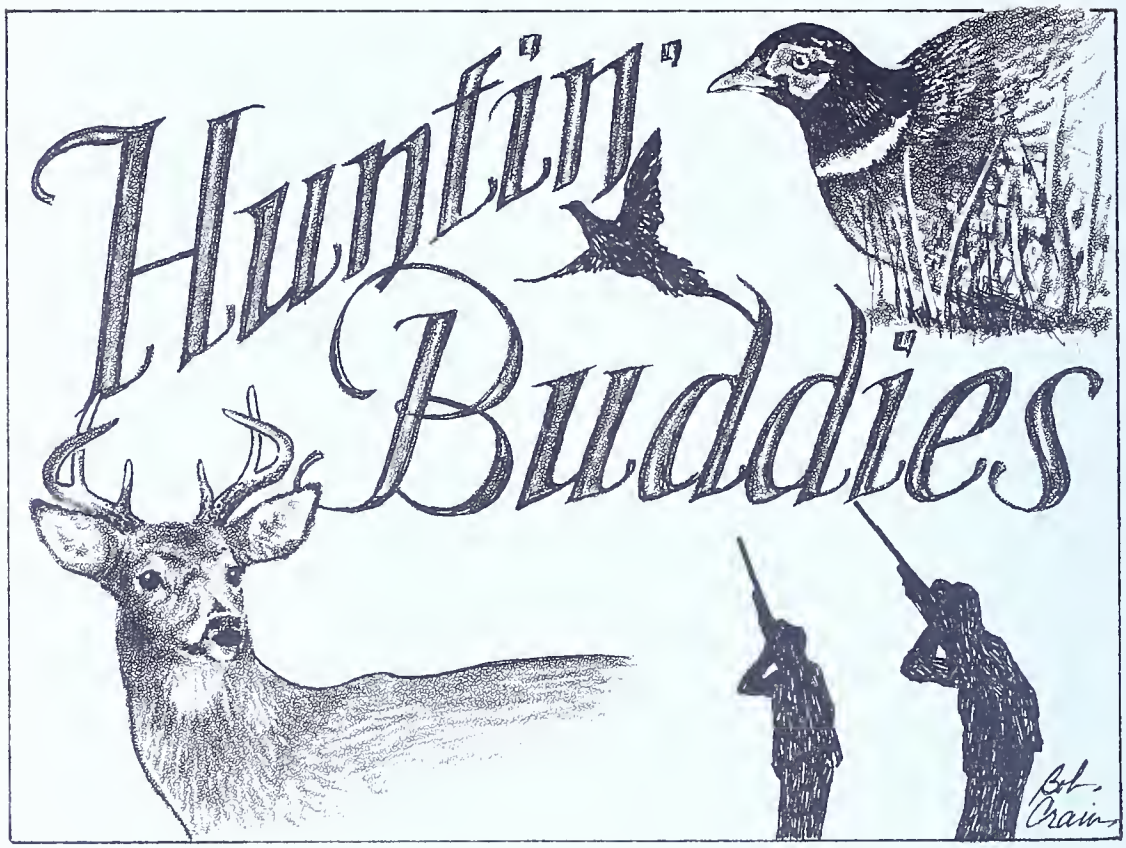
Lesson No. 3.

Pay attention to your gear. Those crepe-soled hunting boots were not the right shoes for those particular hunting conditions. Slick soled, they easily slipped on the dry leaves. I'm convinced I might not have fallen if I had been wearing a pair of lug-soled boots.

Lesson No. 4.

Always carry an emergency survival kit. A small first aid kit and the capability to build a fire, if necessary, should be part of everyone's hunting gear. When I switched from my full backpack to the lighter and more compact fanny pack, I failed to transfer any emergency supplies.

I've documented this experience so that others may take heed of the hard lessons that I had to learn again, after nearly 25 years of hunting in Penn's Woods. The aftermath of this event will be with me for years. The loss of mobility and ability to do for myself was extremely frustrating. Further, the doctor told me that while the leg will heal okay, I should expect to have a complete knee replacement in five or six years. And finally, while I was rescued, thanks to fellow hunters, in a more extreme situation, I could have died due to my failure to plan for such an emergency. Heed these lessons well. □



By Dave Cooper

PENNSYLVANIA hunters are certainly blessed. Deer and bear populations are at all-time highs, and turkey hunting opportunities abound. Resident Canada geese, doves and gray squirrels are also plentiful. And even though there aren't as many as in the past, rabbits and pheasants can still be found by hunters who invest the time and effort. With all of these opportunities available, I anxiously await opening day.

For me, September 1 is the unofficial start of each new hunting season. The weather may be hot and muggy, but there are doves galore, dipping and darting through that muggy summer air. My hunting buddy, Dan Sharrow, and I have pursued these elusive birds together for the past four years. Only 16, Dan is nonetheless a dove hunting veteran. We occasionally jump-shoot doves along the edges of standing cornfields, but we've had most of our luck pass-shooting birds late in the evening near a stand of tall pine trees. Pass shooting doves is a lazy man's game. Dan and I take a cooler filled with cold drinks, fruit and candy bars. Seated on folding stools in the shade of the pines, we pass the time by telling hunting tales. Then, close to dusk, the real action begins. The doves begin flying to roost — singles, pairs and sometimes whole flocks of them. With Dan a short distance off to my right, we watch for the incoming "gray streaks of lightning."

"Here they come, Dan! Two of 'em on your right. Get ready." *Boom. Boom.* "Here they come again, Dan! Right at us! Must be a dozen of 'em." *Boom. Boom. Boom.* Before we know it, quitting time arrives. We pick up all of our empty hulls, gather our equipment and head home. We both agree that hunting doesn't get any better than this.

October is my favorite month of the year. The weather is sunny, the leaves are changing color, and the cool nip of autumn is in the air. Best of all, it's archery season. Mark Sherlinski and I have been archery huntin' buddies for more than 20 years. Although we rarely hunt deer together now, we're still hunting buddies, but in a different sort of way. Mark and I are elementary school teachers, and every morning during the archery season before our workday begins, we compare notes on bowhunting. Our conversation usually goes something like this: "How did it go last night, Mark?" (Mark likes to drive me crazy by pretending to ignore my question or by saying something like, "not bad" or "don't ask." Then he'll slowly get around to answering my question with a long, detailed account of the previous night's bowhunting woes.)

Before I took a step to recover the bird, I was startled to see another wildly cackling rooster flying right at me.

"Dave, I had him dead to rights. He was walking down the trail and didn't have a clue I was there. All of a sudden he stopped, lifted his head and trotted away."

"Wind you, huh, Mark?"

"No way, Dave. I was wearing Scent-Lok camos. I'm jinxed. That's all there is to it."

Then it's my turn. "Mark, I must be snake-bit, too. I had a fat doe below my treestand when . . . " And so it goes the whole month of October and half of November.

In November I hunt pheasants with a four-legged huntin' buddy — my Brittany spaniel, Belle.

In October, while conditioning Belle in my neighbor's hay field, she pointed ringneck roosters on three separate occasions.

We returned to this field one Saturday in early November, and as Belle ranged back and forth in front of me, hunting into the wind, she began to act "birdy." Her tail wagged furiously as her nose vacuumed the ground 10 yards in front of me. She then pointed and a ringneck rooster flushed. I swung hard to the right, and at the shot the winged pheasant dropped into the waist high hay.

Before I took a step to recover the bird, I was startled to see another wildly cackling rooster flying right at me. It landed 50 yards away on the side of a small hill. Belle, apparently searching for the wounded bird, was nowhere to be seen. I yelled for her as I hustled to the spot where I had seen the second ringneck land. The bird flushed nearly at my feet, and it folded at the shot and fell a short distance away. I put it into my game bag and then went looking for Belle and the other pheasant.

Belle was hidden in the high cover, so I stood on top of a small knoll and yelled for her. I was getting flustered. I needed Belle to find the winged bird. Then I saw something moving at my feet. I reached down and grabbed hold of a very much alive ringneck. The winged bird had crawled beneath the thick grass to hide, and unbelievably, I had nearly stepped on it. Belle then came back and happily wagged her tail as I showed her the two ringnecks. We were two lucky and happy hunters.

Another memorable pheasant hunt last year took place on the last Saturday of the season. Tim Cook, my long time huntin' buddy, and I have hunted ringnecks on the last day of the regular season for a lot of years. Tim's uncle, Al Harris, another huntin' buddy, usually comes along. It may be the last day of the season, but we rarely come home empty-handed. Tim's father, Alvie, owns a farm near Selinsgrove,

and also rents hundreds of additional acres, and we have permission to hunt all of it.

Early in the morning we headed for a large field of weeds and briars that bordered a picked cornfield — perfect ringneck cover. Tim, Al and I spread out and worked our way through the lower edge of the field. Belle worked back and forth in front of us, but pheasants began flushing wildly, far out of range.



Finally, Belle went on point and a ringneck flushed, giving me a long crossing shot. The bird folded at my shot, though. We continued on, and Belle pointed and we flushed nearly a dozen pheasants, mostly hens. A couple of roosters flushed wildly and curled back into the field behind us. After taking a short break we headed back through the thick weeds. More roosters flushed, but all out of range. It was, to say the least, frustrating. Obviously these wily birds had played this game before.

We reached the end of the thick cover and were standing there talking when a rooster flushed in front of me. Up came the shotgun, and at the shot, down came the bird. My huntin' buddies really razzed me. "How come they always flush in front of you?" asked Tim.

"Yeah, Dave. We kick 'em up and you shoot 'em," Al said.

"You guys are hunting with a master pheasant hunter," I replied smugly.

By the end of the day Tim and Al had their share of luck, too, with more ringnecks and rabbits in the bag. We ended the season with some glorious memories.

Hunting has been a big part of my life for as long as I can remember. And, nothing gives me more satisfaction and joy than spending autumn days afield or retelling hunting tales with my huntin' buddies. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

2000 Shooter's Bible and **Gun Trader's Guide, 22nd Edition,** by Stoeger Publishing Company, 5 Mansard Court, Wayne, NJ 07470, 576 pp., each for $23.95 plus $3 shipping. The 2000 *Shooter's Bible* continues the tradition as the unequaled source book for currently manufactured firearms. This year's *Shooter's Bible* devotes more pages to new and currently produced firearms than any other publication. Detailed specifications, hundreds of photographs and current manufacturer suggested retail prices are listed for more than 3,000 modern firearms manufactured by U.S. and foreign manufacturers. Completely revised and expanded, the 22nd edition *Gun Trader's Guide* includes more photographs, listings and specifications than ever before. More than 6,000 rifles, shotguns and handguns have been reviewed and refined to reflect the most up-to-date product data and pricing.

Lady Luck

By Amy Francisco

LADY LUCK, ever hoped for but so often elusive, smiled kindly on me during my first turkey hunt. Although forewarned of the slim prospects of bagging, let alone seeing, a wild turkey on my initial trek into the turkey woods, Lady Luck changed the odds in my favor, and the memories will never be forgotten.

I'm a forty-something woman who recently faced the age-old midlife crisis of empty-nest syndrome. A good friend and tennis buddy, Janet Nyce, thankfully recognized a potential kindred woodswoman in me. She took me under her wing and has diligently served as my outdoors mentor.

Having been raised on a horse farm in Bucks County, I was certainly familiar with the outdoors. Besides all the horseback riding, during my teenage years I enjoyed backpacking on the Appalachian Trail and skiing. But, somehow during my 20-year stint as a "domestic engineer," I lost touch with nature.

With Janet, I attended two workshops (one in Pennsylvania and one in Wyoming) designed for women interested in learning more about the outdoors. I came away with a wealth of information on a variety of topics. More importantly, I experienced an attitude adjustment. No longer was I an antihunter or a fence-sitter but, instead, a hunting advocate. I learned that the big three — preservation, conservation and education — were top priorities with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. And I began to understand that it's through the purchase of hunting licenses and duck stamps that game lands and wetlands have been acquired and that wildlife has been successfully managed. I was a convert.

We honed my newfound shooting skills with the rifle at the gun range, with the shotgun at various sporting clays courses, and with the revolver at a self-protection class. And we hiked, not only to enjoy Mother Nature's bounty, but also to improve our overall condition.

The culmination of all this education and preparation was an invitation from Janet and her husband, Jim, to



their mountain home in Perry County. My husband, Bill, and I were to partake in three days of turkey hunting. Who would have imagined that within the first hour of hunting, I would be standing proudly over my first turkey?

Perry County, in southcentral Pennsylvania, is a scenic region with an abundance of wooded, hilly ridges rising from broad agricultural valleys. We arrived amid glorious fall sweater weather, and it held throughout our extended weekend.

The first order of business was to discuss our game plan for that afternoon. Jim, an avid long-time hunter, instructed us on the fine art of flock busting. I was assured that rushing a flock like a banshee was truly proper fall turkey hunting etiquette. (As with all hunting endeavors, gun safety must be strictly adhered to.) I learned that the purpose of this technique is to scare the bejesus out of the birds, to scatter them to the four winds. The best time to accomplish this is just prior to their going to roost in the evening. Arrive in the general area first thing in the morning and, voilà, a bunch of worried turkeys looking to rejoin their buddies, which should be eager to respond to well-timed calls.



Turkey vests and the requisite hunter orange were donned over our camouflage clothing. The women took the "high road" to the ridgetop, with the men following a lower route along the base of the mountain. Recent scratchings in the leaf litter were indicative of a potentially interesting afternoon of hunting.

Janet and I found ourselves rapidly overheating during our climb, and a much needed breather found us shedding some excess clothing. What a relief, but then onward we went.

The smell of the decaying leaves on the forest floor, the sounds of the chipmunks, squirrels, birds, and the crunching of our footsteps, and catching a brief glimpse of a ruffed grouse as it whirred away made us feel as if we were in heaven.

Upon reaching the crest we opted to split up. Janet disappeared over the far side of the ridge. My directions were to set up against a large tree and try to blend in. Not a problem: I was in borrowed camo to blend in with the woods and fallen leaves.

After a little detective work, I found the perfect tree to set up against. It was in a fairly open area, and it actually looked promising as far as comfort goes. I then realized that I should have done a dry run with the turkey vest, to figure out how to lower the seat pad, when I spotted a turkey soaring over the treetops toward Janet. I froze, and after what seemed like an eternity but was more likely just milli-seconds later, I heard a rustling of leaves. To my novice ears, it sounded like a stampede of raging elephants. And it was making a beeline towards me. It was time to face the music, as through the laurel plunged a turkey, legs pumping furiously. There I was, standing, not sitting, by my tree. I positively identified my target — not once, but twice — and the turkey stopped 25 yards

away. Apparently, it had also confirmed my identification and came to a screeching halt. A mutual doubletake was confirmation enough for both of us.

I will never be convinced that hunting is not an aerobic exercise, because my heart was pounding like it never had before. The moment of truth had arrived. I had a clear shot and raised my 12-gauge to my shoulder, put the bead on the turkey's head and neck area, eased off the safety, and squeezed the trigger. It was a quick, clean kill.

The shot ringing through the woods quickly brought my three hunting partners to my side as I proudly stood over my bird. I felt an incredible reverence for this beautiful hen. I filled out my tag and, in so doing, had in a small way participated in wildlife management. I was a successful hunter. What an awesome adventure.

My hunt had ended. The turkey was tagged, and then I trudged down to the house, my elation barely in check. It was so satisfying to fill out my report card for the Game Commission.

Jim gave me a brief demonstration on gutting a turkey (something that I hope to have the chance to master in the future). The crop was filled with wild grapes. I'm convinced that those grapes helped to flavor the meat, which eventually provided us with a couple of tasty meals.

The remainder of the weekend I spent small game hunting and generally reveling in nature. The thrill of witnessing dawn and dusk. Having a red fox lope by within 10 feet. Watching a ruffed grouse swoop down from a tree and strut about. Squirrels and chipmunks cavorting about the woodland floor. Buck rubs here, there and everywhere. Tundra swans "whooping" thousands of feet above as they winged their way south. These are the memories that are indelibly etched in my mind.

I enjoyed sharing in the excitement of the other hunters' turkey tales. Bill witnessed the turkeys going to roost that evening, and was present the following morning when they "flew the coop." Because darkness prevailed both times, he was unable to take a shot. The following day Jim bagged his bird when Bill nobly (although not necessarily intentionally) pushed the turkeys toward his stand. And Janet had a flock coming in to her calls until something spooked them.

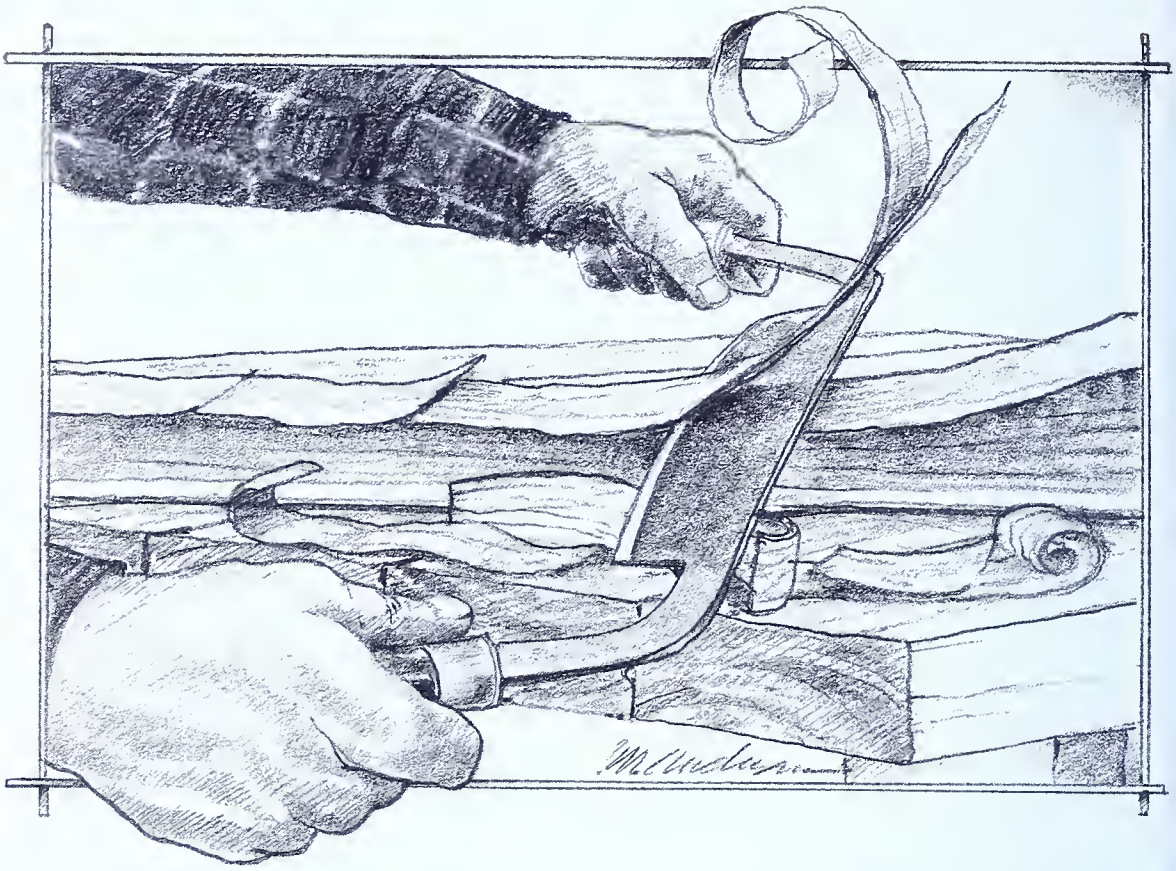
On Sunday, before leaving for home, we got out our rifles. Targets were set up across an open area with a ridge as a backstop, and we sighted in our guns. My next adventure would take place during buck season.

A prominent place of honor has been reserved for displaying my mounted turkey tail fan. It will serve as a reminder of the exciting and fulfilling tradition of hunting, the shared experiences with good friends, and the peace of mind discovered in nature. I am a lucky lady. □

Cover Painting by Jack Paluh

"THE EVENING was crisp and calm, and I felt the presence of someone or something staring at me. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a buck, a nice one, too, looking up at me. He came down the path that paralleled my treestand. I was frozen in place. My heart was pounding so loud, I was sure that he had heard it . . . "

Jack Paluh captures this experience that most hunters can identify with in "First Hunt." Designed to promote youth hunting, this month's cover is a refreshing outlook for both novice and seasoned hunters alike. An edition of 850 signed and numbered prints is available. Prints measure 15x18 3/4 inches, and cost $75 each; artist proofs are available, 95, for $100 each. Shipping is $12 and PA residents must add 6% sales tax. Order from Jack Paluh Arts, Inc., 2869 Old Wattsburg Road, Waterford, PA 16441. Phone (814) 796-4400.



A Certain Discipline

By Bob Butz

NO ONE would ever buy any of the bows I've made. They're clumsy, heavy looking things, sorely lacking in what you would call aesthetic appeal. Most of my bows are made from hickory, because hickory is such a forgiving wood, endlessly tolerant of my ineptness with the drawknife and the rasp. I have a few bows made from more glamorous woods — such as osage and yew — but truthfully, I'm much too inexperienced as a bow maker to reap any of their supposed virtues.

A friend of mine — a professional bow maker and aficionado of fine woods — gets his yew direct from Washington and Oregon, his osage from Texas and Oklahoma. He has a special room behind his shop where his staves and billets are stacked along the wall like bottles of Bordeaux wine. I like to think of him as a connoisseur of fine woods.

I'm quite content to fiddle around with less bewitching fare. Some of it's because I doubt I could do justice to a good stave of osage. But mostly, I know, it's because I've always been more interested in what ex-

actly is at the core of this childish fascination with bows and arrows rather than what kind of material a bow happens to be crafted from.

When it comes to hunting with archery tackle, my own reasons partly mirror those sentiments of the late Jay Massey who, in his book *The Bowyer's Craft*, supposed that because the bow and arrow has been part of our culture for so many thousands of years, perhaps our affinity for it is ingrained in our collective psyche.



But making bows and arrows is altogether different, I think — at least for me. It's not in my blood the way the hunting end of it seems to be. I've been making bows long enough to know that I will never be particularly good at it. However, it will always remain a secret ambition of mine to create just one bow that will outlast me.

I've always been especially fond of bows that have histories deeply and intimately entwined with those of their makers. For example, a friend of mine has a beautiful flatbow he cut from the locust tree under which he killed his first buck. Lightening struck the tree one summer, and from its splintered remains he pulled a stave.

Another friend has a bow he made from a fence post that he salvaged from the wake of a bulldozer after his father died and he was forced to sell half of the family farm.

Although I may never find a stave of wood with this kind of lore, I realized a long time ago that the real reason I continue making bows is ultimately because of the metaphor that, for me, has always overshadowed the task.

The bows I've carved have always had their fair share of nicks, scratches, gouges and scrapes. They are clumsy in the brush and heavy in the hand. Somebody once described a bow of mine by calling it "a little awkward," which I guess is okay because I've always considered myself to be a little awkward, too. I used to get in fights all the time because I had a funny last name and a bit of a stutter. Certainly then, you'll understand when I tell you how I've never been much of a talker.

When I was young, I spent a lot of time in the woods; often I took refuge in the trees. One tree in my woods — an enormous, hollowed out dead one — was so big in its cavernous middle that I could crawl inside it and literally disappear from the world.

I used to pretend I was part of that tree, part of the woods. Growing up out there like that, not wanting to have anything to do with anybody or the world, I became something of a recluse. My skin as tough as bark, I became something of an oaf and cretin, even with things that require a delicate hand.

Hunting with and making bows, however, is a pursuit that demands a certain discipline. And although I'll probably never build a bow that anyone would take more than a passing glance at, I'm learning there is something more, something worthwhile in the process itself: the stripping off of all that bark, of cutting down through the layers, trying to find the curves and the delicate lines and the shape of the thing that's hiding inside. □

A Dirty Job

OPENING DAY of buck season had been extremely busy, and it was quitting time before I had time to catch my breath. I was just about to head home to take care of a few mistaken kills when the region office radioed. "Avis to 334."

"Go ahead, Avis," I responded, expecting information on a violation. "You've got two hunting accident victims at the hospital in Coudersport. Can you respond?" I said yes and headed for the hospital. Investigating a hunting incident is a part of the job no WCO likes.

I was at the hospital, conducting interviews and taking photos, when a nurse informed me that I had a phone call. Linda, one of the dispatchers at the region office, told me that a field-dressed doe had been found hanging in a tree not far from my house. I advised her that I was about done with my initial interviews and would contact the individual who had found the deer as soon as I got home.

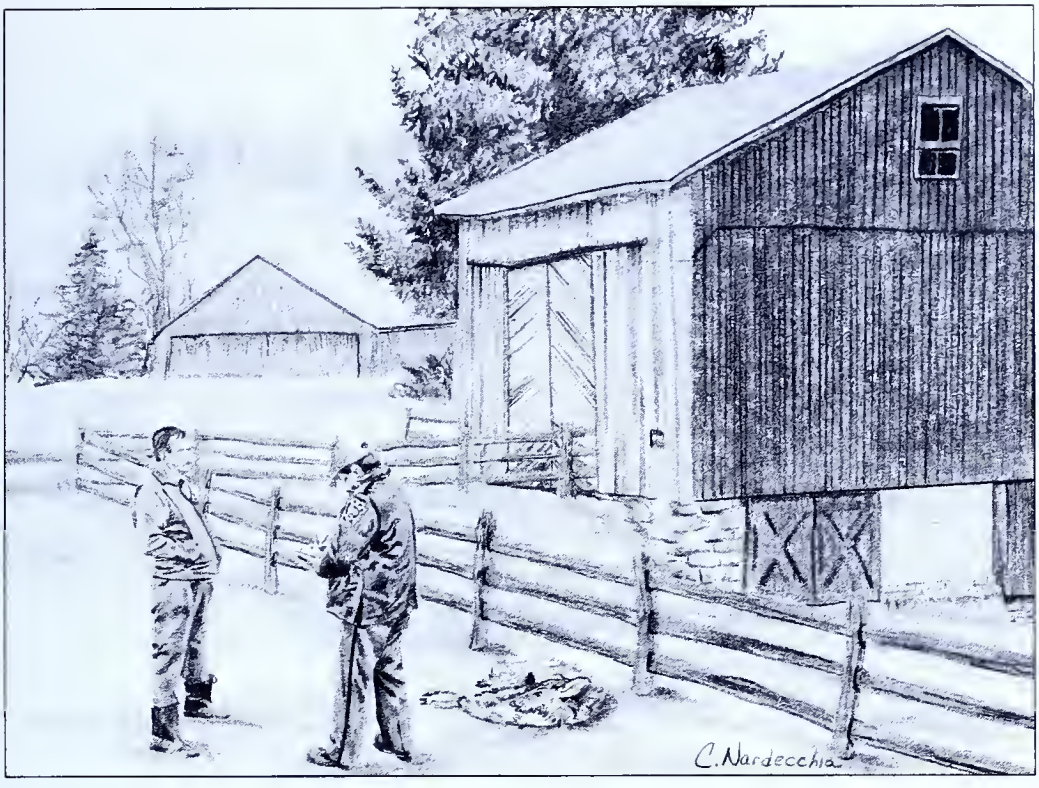
On my way home I radioed WCO Dave Stewart, my neighboring officer, and asked if he was available to assist. He told me that he and Waterways Conservation Officer Jerry Crayton would meet me at my place. I also called my deputy, Shawn Smith, who agreed to meet me.

When I called the person who had found the deer, he told me that while hunting behind "the Admirals," a well-known home only about a mile from mine, that he had found the doe hanging in a maple tree. I asked him if he would take me to the deer, and he agreed as long as he could remain anonymous. Dave, Jerry, Shawn and I met the informant and decided that the informant, Deputy Smith and I would go to the deer, while officers Stewart and Crayton would hide their vehicle and wait in case the violator escaped us.

By this time it was pitch black out and we didn't want to be seen or heard on the way in, so we traveled without lights. We headed down an old railroad grade and had gone about a half mile when we saw what appeared to be headlights a half mile or so in front of us. The informant whispered, "That's gotta be them." I told him to go back home, and that we would let him know how we made out.

Shawn and I took off running down the railroad grade. As we got closer, I could see that the light was from an ATV. The noise of the machine covered the sound of our footsteps and the grunt that I made when I reached it. In the darkness I had tripped on a rock and hurt my left foot. I was unaware of how much damage, but the injury later required surgery and a lengthy recovery period. We didn't see anyone near the ATV.

By Bill Ragosta
Potter County WCO



"Shawn, you stay here. If this guy comes back to the ATV, don't let him go anywhere. I'm going up there to find him." I stumbled uphill into the woods. I hadn't gone far when I heard footsteps in the leaves above me and soon saw a faint light. When I was within 15 yards of the silhouette, I shouted, "Game Commission officers, stay where you are." As I approached the individual, I could see that it was a lanky youngster. I spoke briefly to the boy, and he admitted that his Uncle Joe had killed the deer and that they had hung it in the tree with the intention of coming back after it. The boy said Uncle Joe thought that shooting a doe in buck season was no big deal, because it was near his farm.

I called Shawn and, with help from the boy, we found the doe. After finding out that the youngster was only 16, we immediately headed back with the doe to meet the other officers. When we got out to the end of the railroad grade where the other officers were, we asked Dave and Jerry to take the lad, Derry Michaels, home and advise his parents of what was going on.

Shawn and I drove straight to Uncle Joe's house, hoping to get there before he received a phone call from his brother, Zeke, Derry's dad. As we pulled into the driveway of Uncle Joe's farm, the head and hide of another doe were visible out by the barn. Shawn walked over and saw that the deer was a small buck that wasn't tagged. Joe met us at the door. "I'm Officer Ragosta and this is Officer Smith, are you Mr. Michaels?"

"Yeah, what do you want?"

We gave Joe a rundown of what we knew so far and asked about the untagged deer by the barn. "My 12-year-old son shot that buck on the farm. He doesn't need a license, does he?" Joe asked innocently. I explained that his son could hunt on the farm without a license, but that the deer should have a homemade tag on it. If

Joe was telling the truth, I wasn't too concerned about the buck, but I had a feeling that he may have been fibbing just a bit. After a short discussion, Joe finally acknowledged that he had shot the deer that we had found in the woods. He just couldn't understand why we were making such a big deal about an illegally taken doe.

Joe volunteered to follow us over to his brother's house, so we could take care of the violation. When we got to Zeke's place, which was only a mile or so up the road, Zeke and Derry were in the driveway talking with the other officers. Shawn and I stepped from the truck and Officer Stewart met us halfway. He whispered that Zeke was denying any knowledge of the doe, and that there was another partly butchered doe hanging in plain view in Zeke's shed.

We were on a constant state of alert, fearing that a physical attack could occur at any moment. In 10 years of law enforcement, these were the most belligerent people I had ever encountered.

The group agreed to give us written statements about the violations, so we advised them of their Miranda rights and gave them statement forms to fill out. Between the three statements, we had anywhere from three to seven members of the hunting party that day, and from one to four deer being killed. It was clear that their statements were not truthful. Joe's statement claimed that only his wife and 12-year-old son had killed deer (He had previously admitted to having killed one). Zeke said that he killed a doe, but didn't know if anyone else did. Derry's statement was probably closest to the truth. He said that his dad, Uncle Joe and a friend by the name of Heff had each killed deer, and that he didn't know who killed the untagged deer that was at Uncle Joe's place.

I sent Deputy Smith back to Joe's place to chat with Joe's wife; we wanted to check his statement. He came back several minutes later and said that Joe had to be lying. Joe's wife told Deputy Smith in no uncertain terms that neither she nor their 12-year-old had hunted at all that day.

Zeke invited us into his house, and we didn't know if he was trying to be hospitable, or if he wanted us away from the quartered doe in the shed. Although all of the suspects had been reasonably cooperative, things soon took a turn for the worse. Being on their home turf gave the offenders an advantage, and they soon became belligerent. Even Derry began cussing at us. Wanting to avoid any kind of physical confrontation, we left Zeke's kitchen. Once again, though, the whole gang ended up out in Zeke's driveway, and the "fur" didn't stop flying there, either.

About the only useful information we had received was that the head and hide of the quartered deer in the shed had been thrown in one of Joe's fields. I think Joe and Zeke thought we would accept this story without checking it out, but we weren't about to accept anything. We had received too much interference from these individuals to not fully investigate every lead we had.

Deputy Smith gallantly agreed to search the field with a flashlight. Zeke insisted that when we found it, the tag would still be attached. Not expecting the hide to be there, I was surprised when Shawn returned 20 minutes later with a doe's head and hide, without any tag.

All four of us officers were on a constant state of alert, fearing that a physical attack could occur at any moment. In 10 years of law enforcement, these were by far the most difficult and belligerent people I had ever encountered. I was proud of my fellow officers' professional demeanor during the encounter. Conservation officers frequently deal with explosive situations, day and night, oftentimes in remote areas, yet practically all the WCOs and deputies I've worked with have maintained positive attitudes and behaved professionally at all times.



Although there were still unanswered questions that needed to be addressed, I felt that it would be in our best interest to collect the illegal and improperly marked doe and deer parts and leave. Nothing constructive was likely to come from a continued verbal exchange with non-compliant individuals. After collecting what we needed, we drove back to my place to sort things out and decide on our course of action.

After talking about the case and our evidence, we agreed that seven charges would be filed for possession of untagged and illegally taken deer, along with an interference charge. (Later, while hearing an appeal, the county judge said that if he had been the arresting officer, he would have filed 27 charges, not seven.)

Several of our charges were thrown out at a hearing before the district magistrate. Those that the defendants were found guilty of were appealed to County Court, but the defendants lost.

Although it was satisfying to hear the county judge admonish the defendants and congratulate the officers on their restraint and good judgement, something was missing. I had received a serious injury that would later cause me to lose nearly two months of work. Deputy Shawn Smith did a super job that night and ended up covered in cow manure. Officers Jerry Crayton and Dave Stewart took more than their share of verbal abuse from the defendants. I had started that day at 5:30 a.m. and didn't finish until midnight.

We all felt that we had worked awfully hard on the case, and the families of the defendants had lied to the media and our supervisors about what had occurred that night. Most law enforcement officers are used to this sort of thing, so we just let it go without trying to defend our actions to the media. (Our supervisors, of course, were well advised of everything that had occurred.)

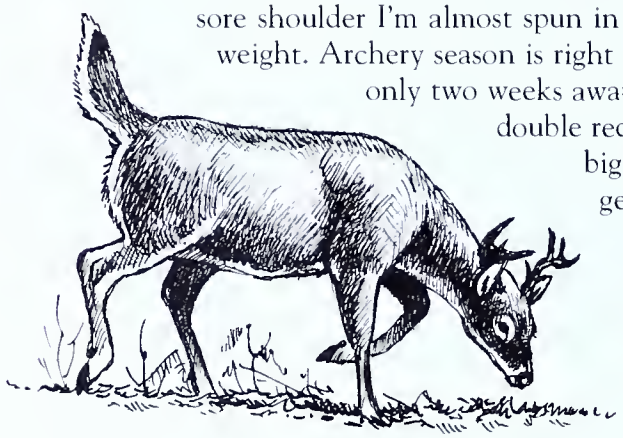
When it finally was all over, we hoped that the defendants, especially the 16-year-old, had learned something from the encounter and would be less likely to violate game laws in the future. It turned out, though, that just 12 months later, three officers who had helped with this case were in Joe Michael's barn, looking at five unlawfully taken deer. Some people just never learn, but that's another story. □

PENN'S WOODS SKETCHBOOK

ON HIGHER GROUND

BY BOB SOPCHICK

THE DAYS OF SUMMER FLY BY like a contrived scene in an old movie where the pages of a calendar begin to flutter, then are torn away by the winds of time, one by one. That's how it seemed to me, winter just ended, then scorching July with record drought and endless, coppery skies. It's time to get back in the groove with the bow, but after several months of intensive painting with countless repetitive movements, I notice a dull ache in my shoulder that progresses to searing pain. I'm not only unable to draw my longbow, but every movement, no matter how simple, is excruciating.



In August I try to shoot claybirds, but when my hammergun recoils into my sore shoulder I'm almost spun in a circle, like taking a punch from a heavyweight. Archery season is right around the corner and the opener for doves only two weeks away. I can't draw my bow and even a 20-gauge double recoils too much. Panic sets in. I have another big push of work to complete, and my shoulder gets worse.

I cannot bear the thought of a rotator cuff causing me to miss archery and dove seasons, so instead of seeking further treatment, I decide to find a way through it all. My father tells me to try his Darton compound bow, with its 60 percent let-off, and I'm surprised that I can anchor it. Hmm.

A few days later I'm set up with a new Matthews MQ-2 with an 80 percent let-off and all the accessories. An hour later I'm grouping arrows well at 25 yards. The pain is awful, but at least I can get to full draw. I practice daily, but can shoot no more than a half-dozen arrows in a session. Every shot I take is very deliberate, each motion exactly the same, and I'm getting consistent groups. Then one day, after three shots, I am in agony. I decide to rest for a few days then hunt some doves.

I opt for my old Sweet-16 Browning autoloader, as it doesn't recoil much. Surprisingly, I can swing the gun well and the recoil is negligible. The next morning I'm back on the archery range and group six arrows into a tight fist. No pain, not even a twinge. Nothing. How could this be? I shoot several dozen arrows and am as mystified as I am delighted. I shoot two sessions every day during September, and by the end of the month I'm really dialed in. I have six days set aside for bowhunting, three in mid-October and three during the November rut.

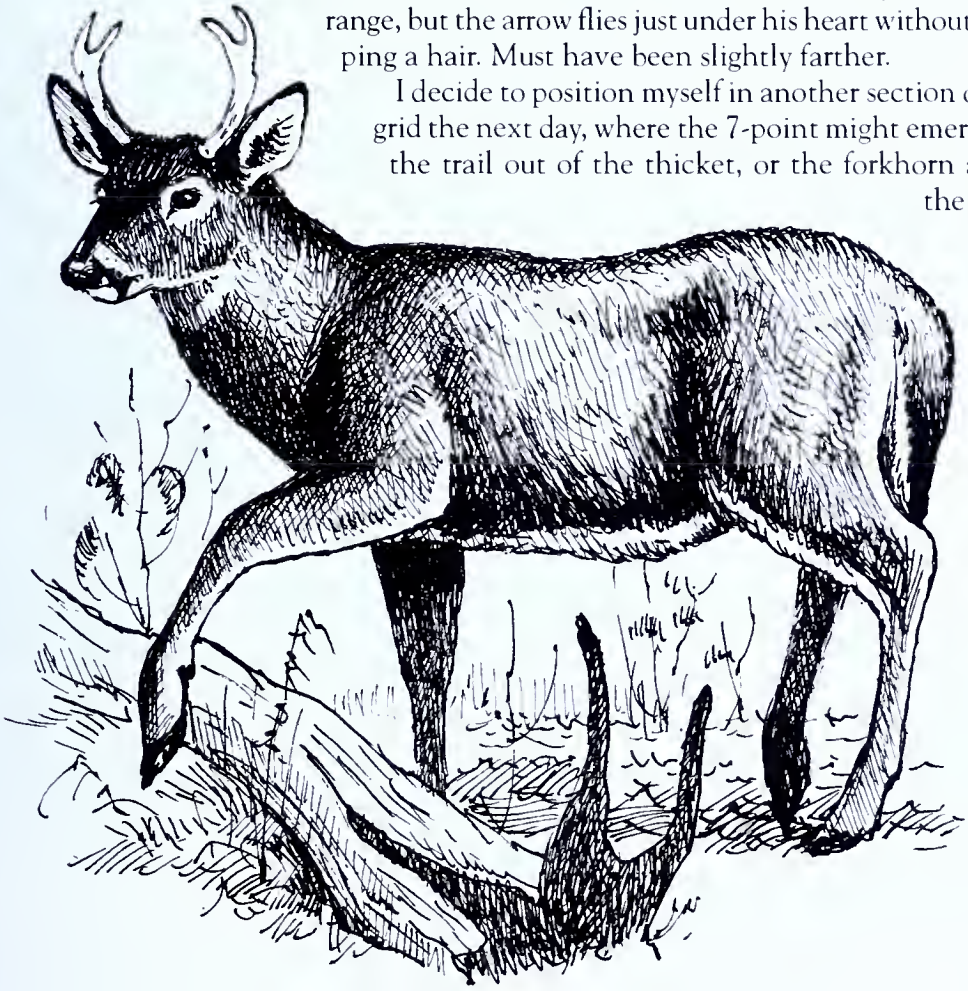
When I slip into the woods I'm thankful just to be able to hunt; anything else would be a bonus. I head for higher ground, seeking an altitude to match my attitude. After two miles of uphill hiking my euphoria subsides; it's time to get serious, to slow to the rhythms of the woods.

The mast crop is amazing, every trail and tram road is cobbled with acorns. On a high slice of the ridge I come upon a pair of seeps where water bubbles and the black mire is pocked with deer tracks. I hear the grunt of a nearby buck but can't pinpoint its direction because of the wind. Then I spot the spindly legs of deer walking in a thicket. "Four, five, six, seven," I whisper. A 7-point buck, head low, and coming my way. He is only 15 yards out, but his body is obscured by brush. I step behind a tree and nock an arrow, ready to draw. The wind shifts and the buck trots off. I wait near the trail for several hours, then look around the gentle glade, planning tomorrow's set-up.

The glade is a confluence of whorls on the topo map, a slotted curve where everything coming up and going down the mountain would pass through. In addition to the springs, there are many witch hazel shrubs and towering oaks. I locate two fresh scrapes and several buck rubs. Curtains of greenbriar and grapevines hang between several large windfalls. Four deer trails form a large tic-tac-toe grid, and I try to figure in which space I want to place my X the next morning. I think back to the summer and how my shoulder suddenly healed and how I happened upon this special place, as if I were led here. Dare I hope for a third miracle tomorrow?

When I sneak into the glade the next morning two deer bound away. I find a seat in the windfall near the big scrape. It's chilly, but I'm soon warmed by the sun on my back. Any deer approaching from the thicket will have the sun in its eyes — an important advantage for the hunter on the ground. I watch for deer coming uphill, from the hollow below, but am surprised to see one coming down the mountain. It's a forkhorn, sleek and wary. He stops and looks in my direction, but he can't detect my scent or make out my form. He is following one of the seeps, and stops under the low hanging branches of a beech. Looks like 30 yards, within range, but the arrow flies just under his heart without clipping a hair. Must have been slightly farther.

I decide to position myself in another section of the grid the next day, where the 7-point might emerge on the trail out of the thicket, or the forkhorn along the seep.





Being an artist and writer is labor-intensive work, endless hours at the drawing table or in front of the computer. Most work days span 12 to 14 hours, a long time to be in one spot. When autumn rolls around I'm eager to drift through the uplands. For that reason, I usually don't hunt out of a treestand, even though it's probably the most effective way to take a deer with a bow. I've been fortunate enough over the years to happen upon deer by still-hunting, and it satisfies my wanderlust.

Morning mists ease through the glade like phantom deer, then become more opaque as the sun burns them off. The open woods to my back, I can see both trails from my stand. The woods is alive with squirrels and chipmunks and noisy jays. I visualize deer walking down both trails. This has helped me take many deer over the years, because when they do appear I'm ready to make the shot, having already taken it in my mind dozens of times. I am not prepared for a rustle behind me, though, and turn to see a dandy 8-point coming around a windfall. I start to draw, but he stops and looks at me, then walks woodenly back around the windfall. Later on, I meet up with Dad and brother-in-law Dave. Dad, too, had seen an 8-point and a 6-point, and Dave missed a piebald forkhorn. Action is warming up on the mountain, but I can't return until the rut.

November, and the glade is decorated with a yellow lacework of witch hazel blooms, and I can sense the heat of the rut steaming through three inches of wet snow on the mountain. Two does browse slowly through the thicket, and a short time later, two more trot along the dark line of a trail 50 yards below. I have the feeling that a buck is following those does, and as I make my way down through the thicket, I can see an antlered buck hustling along the trail, nose to ground. I walk around the thicket and weave through a greenbriar patch when a red fox runs right up to me, puts on the brakes and looks up at me. He is so near that I can see the slit pupils, like insects caught in amber. He spins wildly, long tail whipping as he flies down the mountain. I sneak around two huge twin oaks, looking for a place to set up near the trail, but an 8-point buck is barreling down the trail from the opposite direction of the does, then stops on the other side of the oak not seven yards away. I'm at full draw, and peek around the trunk, but see him reluctantly moving around me through the veils of grapevines and greenbriar. No shot is offered and I lower the bow, then set up 15 yards off the hot trail and wait. The snow melts off quickly, and by afternoon it is almost balmy.

Near quitting time I take a deeply rutted tram road down the mountain. Halfway down, a beautiful 10-point scoots across the road. I grunt with my call, then scrape leaves away with my boot. The buck trots back across the road, head held high, then edges closer. He snorts, then runs back across the road again. I grunt and scrape the leaves louder. The buck snorts and leaps every time I grunt and scrape. This tryst goes on for 10 minutes. Each time the buck leaps high into the air, bounding twice, then looks in my direction. I sneak farther down the road, and when I'm parallel to the buck he finally takes off, alabaster antlers gleaming in the dusky woods.

The next morning I set up in the gutter that drains the seep. I sit on a log, rubber

boots in the water. Sitting here, I'm almost below eye level of any deer, kind of a treestand in reverse. I snap my release to the string and look to my left at a sapling waving to and fro. Seconds later a forkhorn, the same one I missed a few weeks earlier walks by, ears back, neck swollen, full of himself. I rise, draw and release the carbon arrow with expandable broadhead. The buck trots off, then stops and looks around. He walks across the glade and proceeds up an incline, then falters and falls not 50 yards away. It is 6:50 and the sun winks just above the ridgeline.



I dress out the buck and note the grated bark that fills the grooves at the base of his antlers. He is dark and acorn fat, a fine mountain buck, and slides neatly down the chute of the tram road. As I drag him along I notice wild grapes scattered everywhere, and flush two grouse on the way down. In the hollow beyond I hear the yelps of a turkey flock. I take the buck back to the house and wash him down then hang him in the shade of a pine. After lunch I'm back on the mountain with my shotgun.

I have turkeys in mind, and walk up to a flat where I often kick out birds. The flat was selectively cut several years before and is an obstacle course of treetops and stumps covered with ferns and vines and second growth. Four does file by, then I hear the sounds of a feeding flock. It's a big flock, scattered wide through the broken woodland. The birds are too spread out and the woods too difficult to run through to get a decent break on the flock. I crawl 75 yards over, under and around logs trying to head them off, then set up. When they come into sight they are far to my right and I can only hope to steer them my way by calling. I use a friction and mouth call together and it works. Several birds veer my way and I take a hen.

With the turkey in my vest I pause at a scenic overlook. What a day! And what a view — cerulean skies stretching forever over the rich ochre's and dark wine hues of the forest. The red gods of the hunt have smiled on me this day, this season, but I know even these mythical deities are green with envy, for in this moment I stand in a loftier and lovelier place than even they, here on higher ground.



Guiding for Fun (And No Profit)

By Bob Steiner

SO, YOU WANT to be a hunting guide. The ultimate job, huh? Spending all your time in the woods hunting sounds pretty good. Well, before you give up your day job, let me give you a little advice based on my experience.

As is tradition, I play host and guide to a group of friends and relatives who use our home as a lodge to hunt turkeys and deer with the bow during the first week in November. They come from all over the state and New Jersey.



The first thing you notice as a guide is that many of the hunters get older faster than you do. It must be the jobs they have. Where a few, short years ago "go long" meant go to the remote center of a game lands, it now means hike out of sight of the back of the fields.

As a guide, this means a change in tactics. Where once you could take the hunters anywhere to the game, you now must find game the hunters can get to easily or you have to chase it to them. This involves more legwork for the guide. No matter how good the hunting is in a certain spot, it's only as good as your "clients" ability to get there.

The second rule of guiding becomes especially obvious if all your hunters are friends or your wife's relatives. I'm sure it also holds true in a regular hunting or fishing lodge. That rule is that each hunter is looking for personal attention to make his hunt successful. Trying not to make anyone feel slighted can be difficult.

Last year our hunters had varying amounts of skill — as would most groups of 12. Some of our turkey hunters have 40 or so birds under their belts. For others, we had to loan them calls and show them how to call. Likewise, some of our archers have filled many tags, while others have but a few. The guide's job is to open the window of opportunity equally for each of them. That opportunity window is different for each hunter and related to his or her abilities, yet all go in with equal hope.

Logistics is the third and most important job of guiding. You must situate ev-

eryone so that his chance is enhanced, or at least not affected, by the location of the others. You must decide which vehicles will get the hunters to the starting points, and who will ride home with whom when the day is over. Rendezvous points are determined to ensure anyone in need of any kind of help, be it tracking assistance, a ride to the doctor's or a soda, will get it fast.

All of the archers who visit used to be able to climb trees like squirrels to put up their stands. Now I have two squirrels, two porcupines (they barely "oomph" up) and two groundhogs (who don't leave the ground). Finding a good place for a treestand hunter to be successful is much different than finding a log in a good spot for a ground hunter to hide behind. Archery and treestand equipment are checked daily and repairs done as needed, all of which seem to involve the guide. As a guide, you need to know the parts inventories of local sporting goods shops and hardware stores.



At camp the guide encounters other requirements. Special dietary needs of hunters become ever more prevalent as time goes by. Where chili and regular soft drinks used to suffice, now I need a supply of diet soft drinks, fat-free yogurt and low-salt cheese; plus caffeine-free coffee and tea. Fortunately, several of the younger hunters still subsist on large quantities of cookies.

Where the cook (my wife) used to get many restaurant breaks during the week, she now spends more time preparing meals for our guests. The hunters now need their rest, their pills and such. More and more foam mats accompany the hunters for their week on the floor, where our padded rugs used to suffice, and now they all need pillows.

The line at the bathroom door has become increasingly noticeable, compared to when the hunters were younger and more adventuresome. The raucous snoring that used to keep the lighter sleepers awake, or chase them to the open-air porches, is noticeably absent. Either weight has been lost or the offenders sleep with special snore-proof gadgets strapped to their heads.

A guide gets few opportunities of his own to hunt. Often he is trying to bust a flock of turkeys when he wants to be bowhunting. Or he is helping to track an animal or carting a trophy from the woods during prime hunting time. A good guide must delight in these experiences as much as if they were his own, or he won't guide for long.

When trophy animals are located and patterned, they are allocated with a certain hunter in mind. You are no longer putting in all the scouting hours for your own success. Your harvesting an animal becomes incidental to the hunt. Hunters frown on sitting in a treestand all evening without sighting a deer, only to return to camp to find the guide with "ol mossyhorns" on the game pole.

Guides take responsibility for the welfare of their hunters. This could mean everything from being sure the food they eat is wholesome, to making sure the local hospital can handle a particular medical need if it arises. First aid training is a must. Spare warm clothing and raingear in a variety of sizes can keep a "client" a hunter instead of a grumbling fireplace-watcher that your wife has to listen to. It's im-

perative to have extra orange vests, hats and license holders on hand.

Then there are the responsibilities of trophy care and preparation. Hunters expect you to be able to handle their trophy so it's ready for the taxidermist. If theirs was a harvest just for meat, you are expected to be able to ensure that their family will enjoy it. This can mean anything from field-dressing, skinning, cooling and butchering yourself, to having a local meat processor on standby, even during the early archery season.

The guide is also the camp photographer, so he should have some basic photography skills. It's really not that tough to run a camera, but you do have to think. Most hunters would like to be recognizable in the photo with their trophy. They may say, "Just take it on the pickup tailgate," but will appreciate the photo a lot more if it's a close-up taken with a woodsy background. Shoot plenty of photos; film is cheap.

So, why did I become a guide? It isn't for the money, because I don't charge. It isn't for the challenge, because I retired from a job where logistics, preparation, organization and readiness were my responsibility. I guess guiding for "Turkey Camp Week" each year is about seeing friends and loved ones have fun. It's about learning my local public hunting lands, so they can be shared with those I care about.

When a guide carries out the luggage for his last departing guest, he should experience a little letdown, and I do. The smiles and memories he helped create are leaving for another year. ☐

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FIELD NOTES

Get With It

CRAWFORD — At an HTE class at the Pymatuning Sportsmen's Club an 11-year-old girl asked if the club was going to serve lunch at noon. I told her yes, and then she popped out her cell phone and called her mother to let her know not to bring a lunch for her. I didn't have the heart to tell the girl that I still use a black rotary-type phone.

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE

Valiant Try

When Armagh Township Police and Milroy emergency personnel arrived at the scene of a deer/vehicle collision on Route 322 they were relieved that there were no injuries, but the large doe was killed. Sergeant Troy Snook heard a noise then noticed a fawn that had been expelled from the doe upon impact. Knowing that adult does usually carry twins, the EMTs opened the dead deer up and tried, unsuccessfully, to breathe life into the remaining fawn; they did, however, save the fawn that had been expelled.

— LES TIMOTHY A. MARKS, SOUTHCENTRAL REGION

Learned Lesson

CLARION — A few years ago during the spring gobbler season I cited a man for not wearing fluorescent orange while moving. When I finished explaining why I was citing him and of the dangers of not wearing orange, he said, "When my wife finds out I've been fined, she's going to kill me anyway." I'm happy to report that he's still alive and well, as I ran into him again during the first week of this year's gobbler season. He came out of the woods wearing his orange and carrying his first gobbler.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Precious Liquid

NORTHUMBERLAND — While on Guard duty in Texas last winter, I was curious to see how deer hunting differed from the way we hunt here. Baiting is legal in the Lone Star State, and the stands I saw were quite elaborate. Most interesting, though, was the way they used water as bait. Every stand I saw had large sloping poles that would catch rain from the roof and funnel it into huge tubs, creating artificial watering holes.

— WCO DIRK B. REMENSNYDER, SUNBURY



Extended Family

LUZERNE — WCO Tom Swiech and I were investigating a call about a bear with five cubs hanging around a house. When we arrived, we found only two cubs and, figuring the resident had just miscounted, didn't think anymore about it. After capturing the two cubs we took them into the nearby woods where we knew the mother was, and were about to tree them when we noticed momma bear with three other cubs. We released the two we had in the crate, and they ran down to join their family. The sow gave her cubs a quick bath then all the bears continued on their way.

— WCO MATTHEW M. GREBECK, SHICKSHINNY



Lending Hand, or Paw?

MONROE — Dispatcher Rich Walton asked me to pick up a roadkilled deer for a neighboring officer who was on vacation, and after arriving I began to lower the deer rack on my vehicle. Suddenly, a bear emerged from the woods on the other side of the road, looked both ways before crossing, then grabbed the deer by a leg and carried it back into the woods.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

He Who Hesitates . . .

CHESTER — WCO Rod Bimber was driving down a road when a red squirrel ran into his truck. Only dazed, it soon sat up in the middle of the highway. We got out to move it off the road, so it wouldn't get hit again, but before we could get to it, a hawk swooped down and snatched it off the road.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, UWCHLAND

Wonder No More

CLEARFIELD — When biologist Kevin Jacobs contacted me about banding geese, I was quick to offer assistance. He said that once I saw how it was done, I'd wonder why we weren't doing this years ago. Well, one capsized canoe and about 80 runaway geese later I was definitely wondering. All in all it turned out okay, as we tagged more than 100 birds and had a lot of laughs.

— WCO DAVID L. STEWART, DUBOIS

20/20?

POTTER — I was fishing beside my buddy when he asked, "What's that guy in the black suit doing up there?" I looked up the bank and noticed a black bear on its hind legs pulling down an overhead tree branch. I have to wonder if my friend needs his eyes checked.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Almost Got It

CLARION — While hunting turkeys last spring with my fiancée, I hooted and a turkey immediately gobbled. Ronda said that she gets a quick response in her classroom when she hoots, as all her students gobble. Sorry, Ronda, but I think you mean giggle.

— WCO RODNEY E. BIMBER, RUSSELL

Commendable

CAMERON — Elk can cause big problems for landowners, but recently I've noticed conservation-minded property owners here fencing gardens and fruit trees at their own expense. To these hard working conscientious individuals, thank you on behalf of our wildlife.

— WCO WESLEY N. STAUFFER, EMPORIUM

Good Thought

BEDFORD — After vacationing for a week I returned home to find that someone had left a roadkilled deer in front of my state vehicle, which was parked in my driveway. While I appreciate the helpful gesture, I wish they would have instead reported the deer to the region office. I'm sure glad I was gone only a week.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Obvious Answer

MCKEAN — I was giving clues to help some 4th graders identify furs when, with one particular pelt, I said it's in the weasel family and begins with an "M." One youngster yelled out, "measle," and I had to chuckle before informing him that it was a martin.

— WCO LEONARD A. GROSHEK, SMETHPORT

That'll Teach 'Em

SUSQUEHANNA — Larry Coy and Ken Janoski cut up an aspen tree that a beaver had felled alongside the driveway of Martha Janoski, and stacked the logs in the yard for firewood. The next day, however, Elizabeth Janoski noticed that the wood was missing and thought that if someone needed firewood that badly, they were welcome to it. Several days later, however, she noticed the logs — minus the tasty bark — were on the beaver lodge and in the dam. Not only do we have a lot of beavers here, but we also have the smarter variety.

— WCO CHARLES J. ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Hero

VENANGO — I watched as a car in front of me struck a woodchuck crossing a highway, then, as a larger woodchuck scurried to the center of the road, grabbed its injured comrade by the neck and drug it off the road.

— WCO LEO C. YAHNER, FRANKLIN

No Place Like Home

I'm often asked if I would rather work in the Northcentral Region, where all the exciting wildlife is. Here in the Southcentral Region just last spring, a fisher was killed on a highway just north of the Harrisburg Headquarters; a river otter was killed just south of the building; a pair of bald eagles nested just east of the building; and I see herds of deer, flocks of turkeys and coyotes daily. I haven't seen any elk yet, but I still think Perry County is an exciting place to be.

— GAME LANDS MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR ED WILLOW, MILLERSTOWN

Impromptu

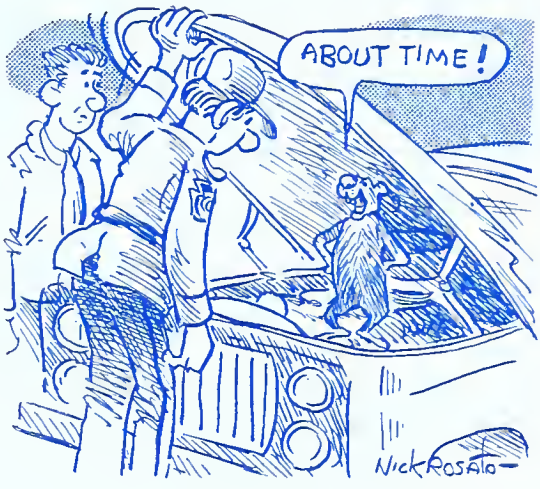
JUNIATA — Last spring I took a bear that we had trapped to the Lack/Tuscarora Elementary School, where teachers stopped classes to allow me to present a short program on how we process the animals. Education today prevents problems tomorrow.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Sad

FRANKLIN — Littering cases can be challenging and then rewarding when a citation is issued. It can also be disheartening when, such as a case I recently had in the Michaux State Forest, the incriminating evidence was the mailing label from *Game News*.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG



Hitching a Ride

CUMBERLAND — Farm-Game Manager Dale Bowman was working at a streambank fencing project near Bloserville when a man in a pickup stopped and said he had a groundhog stuck in his engine. Dale opened the hood, thinking the groundhog was dead but, instead, found himself face to face with a very live hog. Dale jumped back and the groundhog leaped out and ran across a field.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

100 Percent

In 1985, 25 individuals enrolled in the 19th Class at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation near Brockway. All 25 students graduated, a feat accomplished by only two previous classes. Now, 15 years later, all 25 officers are still on the job. Happy anniversary to my fellow classmates and thanks for your dedication to our wildlife resources.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

Tight Squeeze

CAMBRIA — Rebaiting a bear trap, Deputy Erin Kabler was trying to attach the bait high on the inside of the trap to prevent raccoons from stealing it. Unable to reach high enough from the small bait door in the rear of the trap, he entered from the front. You guessed it; the door slammed shut behind him. Erin had two options: Cry for help or try to squeeze through the bait door. He picked the latter and was able to get through the door only after removing some clothing. We didn't catch the bear, but that may have been because Erin used all the bacon grease as a lubricant.

— WCO SHAWN E. HARSHAW, NANTY GLO



Riding it Out

WARREN — Deputy Bob McClelland noticed a hen turkey walking through a field with her brood and, surprisingly, one of the poults was perched on the hen's back.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Lush Growth

The abundant rainfall last spring produced good growth on our food plots. By mowing portions of these plots and strips we encouraged tender new growth, which also attracted insects. On one half-mile section of freshly mowed strip, I noticed a bear, a buck, turkeys with poults and lots of grasshoppers.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Makes You Wonder

UNION — I apprehended an 18-year-old man for riding an ATV through a Farm-Game cooperator's crops, and took him to his parents to inform them of the citations, which included fleeing from an officer. The boy's parents said that because their son hadn't hurt anyone, he would be permitted to continue to ride, and they said that my actions wouldn't stop them from riding their ATVs wherever they wanted, either.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Mystery

INDIANA — I attended a firearms instructor course where most of the officers were police officers from Puerto Rico. I was surprised when one of the officers asked me to identify an animal standing in a field by the range. It seems they don't have groundhogs in Puerto Rico.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Cooperation

GREENE — While investigating a large dumping case in my district, my travels took me into West Virginia. The assistance of West Virginia DNR officers was outstanding. The result of an afternoon of investigating led to a citation being filed in Pennsylvania. Without the efforts of these officers this case could easily have gone unsolved.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, CARMICHAELS

Came Home to Roost

BRADFORD — Vaughn Spotts shot a gobbler in Northumberland County that was wearing a leg band. Vaughn reported the tag number and found that the bird had been tagged and transferred to Northumberland by the now retired PGC biologist Arnie Hayden in 1986. Vaughn then took the turkey to his camp in Tioga County to eat it and mount the tail for the wall. He later learned that Arnie had trapped the turkey not far from his camp.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Getting Even

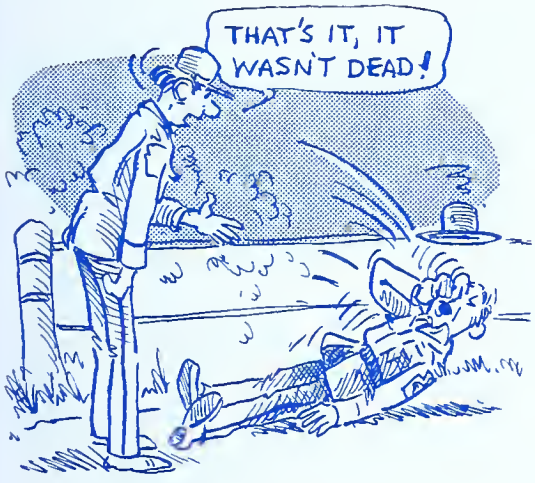
GREENE — Kay Fox told me that while driving her new van she noticed several deer on the road ahead of her. Skidding to a stop, she barely bumped the last deer to cross. The deer whirled around and kicked the front of her van, damaging the grill, radiator and hood, causing $2,200 in damage.

— WCO RODNEY L. BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Proof

I know that loss of habitat is having a drastic effect on grassland birds, but I didn't know how much until I noticed a bobwhite quail crossing Walnut Street in downtown Harrisburg.

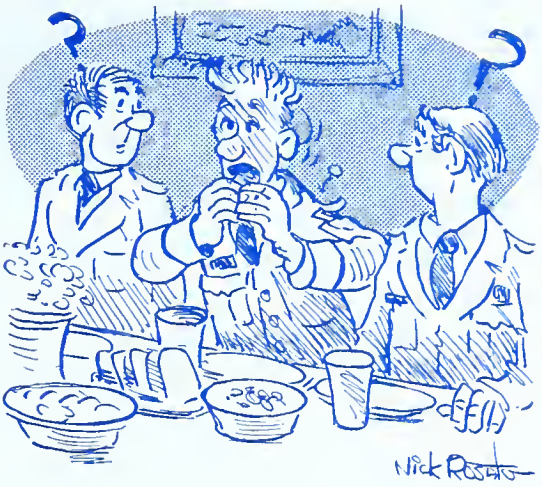
— LMO DAVID R. KOPPENHAVER, NEW PARIS



Priceless

FULTON — State Police Trooper Bruce Cambell of the McConnellsburg barracks noticed a bear get hit by a vehicle on Interstate 70, so he quickly dragged it off the road to avoid another collision. I was called to pick up the dead bear, but couldn't locate it, so I had Bruce show me where he had left it. We found where he had left the "dead" bear, and its trail leading off into the brush. Judging by the look on Bruce's face, he'll probably check to make sure the next roadkilled bear is really dead before he drags it off the road.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE



Mouthful

FOREST — At a recent dinner meeting one of our officers spied what he thought was apple bread and began wolfing down a big slice. The look on his face and his sudden need for large quantities of water revealed he had actually eaten jalapeno pepper bread. How about it, Lenny?

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Nice Try

MCKEAN — After citing a man during deer season for having a loaded firearm while riding on his ATV, I asked why he would commit such a serious safety violation. Jokingly, he said that he was concerned about Y2K and getting venison in the freezer was a top priority. I wondered if he used the Y2K excuse in explaining to his wife why $200 was missing from his checking account.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Payback Coming?

LYCOMING — In the July issue I had a Field Note about my neighboring WCO Terry Wills hanging from a bear trap. Not long after, Terry helped me process a bear, and he didn't say one word about the Field Note. I thought I was in the clear, but then, when after cleaning up, Terry turned to me and said, "By the way, I saw the Field Note and this means war!" Field Notes should be pretty interesting in the future.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, WILLIAMSPORT

New agency logo approved

AT THE JUNE meeting, the Commission unanimously adopted a new Game Commission logo that more clearly depicts the agency's broad wildlife management focus.

Designed by well known *Game News* artist Bob Sopchick, the full-color logo features white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, Canada geese, bald eagle, a beaver lodge, and a hemlock tree and mountain laurel sprig, all set within the agency's traditional keystone design.

"One of the strategies in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management Assistance Team (MAT) report suggested that the agency clarify its mission, to clearly include the vision and values of the agency," pointed out Executive Director Vern Ross.

"By featuring the official state tree (hemlock), wildflower (mountain laurel), animal (white-tailed deer) and bird (ruffed grouse), our new logo exemplifies the scope of this agency's broad wildlife management mission," Ross continued. "The return of nesting bald eagles to Pennsylvania is a true wildlife restoration success story. Canada geese and the beaver lodge are symbolic of our commitment to restore wildlife habitat, especially wetland areas."

The logo selection process took a year and included input from agency employees, which was in line with another of the MAT Report's recommendations. "While the former logo served us well for many years, employees by a wide margin voted in favor of a new logo for our future," said Ross. "Of 515 ballots cast, 378 were for the incorporation of a new color design in one of several versions offered in the balloting process. The retention of the keystone outline was preferred by a majority of the employees."

Ross said the new logo will be phased in over time as existing stocks of stationary and other printed materials are depleted. The changeover to new uniform patches and vehicle markings will take place as budgets allow. The transition is expected to be complete by January 1, 2002.

THE NEW LOGO symbolizes the Game Commission's many varied functions and responsibilities. For a full-color view of the new logo, visit www.pgc.state.pa.us. Choose "Newsroom," then click on "2000 News Releases" and select "Release #34-00."

Ross reports on game land tours

DURING the June Commission meeting Executive Director Vern Ross provided a report on his short-term and long-term goals for habitat improvement on state game lands. Ross' report stemmed from his recently completed tour of 95 state game lands and Farm-Game projects.

"This agency has pledged to spend nearly $9 million on habitat improvement, which is $3 million more than we are required to spend by law," Ross said. "Before spending this money, I believed it was in the best interest of the hunters and trappers — the people who provided this money — for me to get out there and see firsthand what needs to be done and what we have been doing.

"What I learned is that one of the greatest untold stories of the Game Commission is the habitat improvement work we have been doing. It is true that we have much work that remains to be done. But our land managers and food and cover corps have been doing an incredible job."

Of the immediate results of the tour, Ross directed that a list be compiled by region of the game lands with the greatest habitat improvement needs. This "intensive care" list will include what work needs to be done and the equipment and personnel needed to get the job done.

"Over the years, the agency has maintained a habitat improvement plan for each game lands," Ross said. "However, because of a lack of manpower, equipment and resources in the past, it was difficult to put the plans into action. Now that we have nearly $9 million set aside for habitat improvement, we will be able to do the necessary work.

"Once the priority list has been compiled, we will move to implement the habitat plans for those game lands. We also will fast-track the purchase and repair of equipment so our employees can do the work or, in some cases, outside contracting will be done."

Consistent with the MAT report recommendations, Ross said that the agency will put computers with e-mail capabilities in all Food and Cover Corps headquarters.

"We need to make sure our employees not only have the tractors they need, but that they also have the tools to better communicate between themselves, the region offices and the Bureau of Land Management in Harrisburg," Ross said. "By enabling our land managers and food and cover corps to use e-mail, messages and documents, reports and other information can be completed electronically."

"With the support of Sen. Jake Corman and Reps. Mike Hanna and Dan Surra, Director Ross created a 3-man food and cover corps crew dedicated to addressing the habitat needs in the elk range," announced Greg Grabowicz, Bureau of Land Management director. "Once the necessary administrative work is completed, we will have a team to work with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and other partners to improve habitat for elk and other species and to encourage wildlife to remain on public lands."

Grabowicz also noted that a food and cover corps in Snyder County will be receiving an additional employee, which will bring the last 2-person crew in the state up to three.

Ross is also working on the problem of equipment downtime, which he called "one of the biggest challenges." As an example, Ross cited Land Management Group 4 in the Northeast Region, which has 10 employees responsible for 15 state game lands encompassing more than 104,000 acres in four counties.

"Given the limited number of tractors and other heavy equipment this group has, and the fact that there are few direct roads between game lands, our employees are forced to spend valuable hours on the road, moving equipment," Ross said. "We need to identify short-term solutions to this situation. However, we also need to address this issue in the long-term, so I've directed the Bureau of Land Management to draft a reconfiguration of the current land management groups.

"Our employees do an outstanding job of trying to cover the territory they've been assigned. But over the years, new game land purchases have stretched the distances between game lands within the current land management group boundaries. By redrawing the lines, we can shorten the distances that must be covered when moving equipment between various game lands."

Ross noted that this is just the initial phase of goals resulting from his game land tour.

"By failing in the past to effectively promote the work of our land managers and food and cover corps employees, we have left the public with the view that little was being done," Ross said. "Those who accompanied me on the tours will tell you that is not the case.

"In addition, many of the Game Commission's habitat improvement projects have been made possible because of our valuable partners who, year after year, have rolled up their sleeves and volunteered to invest their sweat and financial backing in habitat improvement."

Game Land additions approved

THE GAME Commission approved the addition of more than 350 acres to the agency's 1.4 million acres of state game lands.

In cooperation with the Pa. Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and the Ruffed Grouse Society, the commission will cost share in the $57,900 purchase of a 150-acre parcel in Clearfield County. Pearl Robeson, the seller, will receive $45,000 from the Game Fund, $10,000 from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the NWTF, and $2,900 from the Ruffed Grouse Society.

"This is a perfect example of how hunters and trappers are benefiting from the Game Commission's partnerships with groups such as the NWTF and Ruffed Grouse Society," said Commissioner Samuel J. Dunkle. "The sportsmen and sportswomen of Pennsylvania certainly owe a debt of gratitude to these two organizations for this and other similar projects." The acquisition will become part of SGL 60, which contains more than 8,200 acres.

The commissioners also approved the purchase of 180 acres in Lafayette Township, McKean County, from Walter and Scott Miller, for $54,000. The property consists of about 80 acres of wetlands, 10 acres of reverting fields and 90 acres of forest.

The new parcel will be added to and provide additional access to SGL 62,

which contains more than 1,300 acres.

Commissioners approved the transfer of 27.6 acres in Liberty Township, Tioga County, from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. PennDOT purchased the tract for wetland replacement and terrestrial mitigation for State Route 15. About eight acres of the new parcel is classified as wetlands, and the remainder is forested.

In other Bureau of Land Management business, the commission approved a surface mine and reclamation lease with Sky Haven Coal of Penfield Clearfield County. The project — which is in direct support of Gov. Tom Ridge's re-mining initiative — will require Sky Haven Coal to reclaim and revegetate more than 4,400 feet of abandoned highwall and nearly 11 acres of abandoned mine spoils on SGL 100 in Burnside Township, Centre County.

"In addition, Sky Haven will construct an anoxic limestone drain to improve the overall water quality by reducing acid mine drainage," said Bill Capouillez, PGC hydro-geologist, who negotiated the lease agreement. "The Game Commission also will receive $131,426 from Sky Haven for the 51,120 tons of coal that will be mined and the timber the company must remove to facilitate the re-mining effort."

As the 5-year project progresses, Sky Haven also will carry out a wildlife habitat reclamation and revegetation plan developed by the Game Commission.

Cabot Oil and Gas Corporation of Coraopolis, Allegheny County, was awarded a lease for the oil and gas rights under SGL 111 in Fayette and Somerset counties. Cabot will pay the Game Commission a $15 per acre rental fee and a percentage of the oil and gas production. The company also will carry out a wildlife habitat reclamation and revegetation plan.

Commissioners also approved an oil and gas lease agreement with Devonian Resources Inc. of Pleasantville, Venango County. Under the agreement, Devonian will receive the oil and gas rights on SGL 100.

The Game Commission will receive an up-front bonus payment of $30,000 plus an annual rental rate and a percentage of the oil and gas production. Devonian also will carry out a wildlife habitat reclamation and revegetation plan developed by the Game Commission.

Finally, a donation from Frederick and Beverly Young of a one-fourth interest in 6,525 acres of coal rights underlying a portion of SGL 30 in Norwich Township, McKean County was approved by the commissioners. This donation will give the agency greater control over any mineral recovery program beneath the game lands.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest Region — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Deer hunter survey approved

THE COMMISSIONERS approved a $7,500 grant for Pennsylvania State University to conduct a survey of 1,000 deer hunters this summer and fall. Results of the survey will be available in 2001.

"This survey will allow us to gain further insight into who are Pennsylvania's deer hunters and establish a profile of deer hunter perceptions and characteristics," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Bureau of Wildlife Management director. "We believe this information will be useful in developing deer management strategies while promoting our deer hunting heritage."

In other action, the commission:

- Approved a regulation requiring residents to reach their 65th birthday in the "year of application" before they qualify for senior licenses. The "year of application" is defined as July 1 through June 30;
- Approved to return mourning dove hunting hours to be from noon to sunset during the first portion of the season;
- Accepted a check from the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association (COPA) for $1,000 to help finance WILD Action Grants in the agency's Project WILD program and $500 to underwrite expenses for the Game Commission's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program;
- Gave final approval to a clarification that "private lands only" antlerless deer tags may be used only on privately owned lands and certain public lands — those owned by a federal, state, county or municipal government entity — that have a deer management plan approved by the Game Commission;
- Directed staff to form a committee to explore ways to better assist game donation programs to food banks and the needy, such as "Hunters Sharing the Harvest";
- Approved a regulation moving the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area controlled Canada goose hunting blind drawing from the second Wednesday in August to the second Wednesday in September, to provide hunters more time to apply and to ensure hunters can review federal waterfowl seasons, which are released in early September, before they apply;
- Approved a plan to stop holding the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area special deer hunt in conjunction with the late archery/muzzleloader deer season to ensure safer hunting conditions;
- Authorized the creation of four waterfowl propagation areas of varying sizes — 4, 5, 6 and 70 acres — on SGL 252 in Union and Lycoming counties;
- Authorized opening a road from the start of the early archery season to the close of late flintlock season on SGL 308 in Schuylkill County, from T-808 east one mile to a parking area;
- Authorized the establishment of a permanent bat propagation area on two acres of SGL 298 in Lycoming County, to protect three caves actively used by about 15,000 bats;
- Approved preliminary rulemaking that would permit "any and all single projectile ammunition" in the flintlock muzzleloader seasons. This proposal must be approved at an upcoming commission meeting before taking effect;
- Approved preliminary rulemaking to empower the agency's executive director to extend bear season when there's an inadequate harvest. This

proposal must be approved at an upcoming commission meeting before taking effect;

• Directed staff to develop a report on the issues associated with permitting the sale of inedible wildlife parts;

• Approved rulemaking to include muzzleloading pistols as a legal sporting arm for deer in the Special Regulations Area counties of Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery.

Bald eagle killed in Franklin County; up to $6,750 in rewards offered

ON THE WEEKEND of June 24-25, in the Fort Loudon area of Franklin County, someone shot and killed a bald eagle and cut off its talons.

Found in Peters Township by local citizens, the eagle was an immature bird; it hadn't yet developed the characteristic white head and tail of adults. It takes three to four years for bald eagles to obtain adult plumage.

Franklin County WCO Kevin Mountz said that lab analysis has revealed several clues about the type of firearm used and the time of the eagle's death.

In a tremendous demonstration that Pennsylvanians truly care about wildlife and want to see game law violators brought to justice, so far up to $6,750 in reward monies have been pledged by organizations and individuals for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for killing the eagle.

The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmens Clubs, up to $1,000; the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, up to $1,000; the Pennsylvania Deer Association, $500; the Fund for Animals, up to $250; and Mt. Parnell Fisheries in Fort Loudon, Franklin County, up to $200. Among individuals, $100 was contributed by John Peet of West Chester, and $100 from Sam Goodman of Warminster.

The Game Commission offers a reward of up to $300, $100 of which through the agency's TIP Hotline.

In addition, Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers recently announced that it was offering a reward of up to $1,000 for information that leads to the arrest of the person or persons responsible. Informants may remain anonymous, and they must call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-4-PA-TIPS.

Also, under the U.S. Bald Eagle Protection Act, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service may offer a reward of up to $2,500.

In all cases, informants may remain anonymous, by calling the Pennsylvania Game Commission TIP Hotline at 1-888-PGC-8001; the Game Commission's Southcentral Regional Office at 1-877-877-9107; or Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers.

"Someone knows who shot this eagle and someone knows who removed its talons," Mountz said. "Any information about this incident will be kept in strict confidentiality."

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Early migratory gamebird seasons announced

DOVE SEASON this year will open Friday, Sept. 1, and continue through Friday, Oct. 6. The second and third splits will be Oct. 28 – Nov. 25 and Dec. 26 – Dec. 30. The daily bag limit is 12, and the possession limit after opening day is 24 for all three season splits.

In announcing Pennsylvania's 2000 migratory bird seasons and bag limits, Game Commission Executive Director Vern Ross pointed out that shooting hours for the early season will return to the traditional noon starting time.

For the first split last year, shooting began a half-hour before sunrise, but a few conflicts developed between early morning dove hunters and early season goose hunters. As a result, a return to the traditional noon starting time for the early portion of the three-split dove seasons was made. For the second and third splits, shooting hours will be from a half-hour before sunrise to sunset.

The dove seasons and those for other migratory fowl, including a statewide early Canada goose season, were contained in a package of Pennsylvania selections forwarded to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The early Canada goose season will open Sept. 1 and continue through Sept. 25. In the southeast portion of the state, the early goose season daily and possession bag limits will be five and 10, respectively. In the remainder of the state, the limits will be three and six.

Pennsylvania's woodcock season will open Saturday, Oct. 21, and continue through Saturday, Nov. 4, with a daily limit of three birds and six in possession after opening day. Virginia and sora rails and moorhen hunting starts Sept 1. A season for common snipe will begin Oct. 21.

A Youth Waterfowl Day has been set for Saturday, Sept. 30, exclusively for Junior License holders ages 12 through 15. To participate, a youngster must be accompanied by an adult. The adult may help with calling, duck identification and other aspects of the hunt, but may not be in possession of a firearm.

All migratory game bird hunters, including those afield for doves and woodcock, are required to ob-

2000 Migratory Game Bird Seasons

Species	Open	Closed	Daily/ Possession Limits
Mourning Doves	Sept. 1	Oct. 6	12/24
	Oct. 28	Nov. 25	12/24
	Dec. 26	Dec. 30	12/24
Canada Geese			
Southeast Zone	Sept. 1	Sept. 25	5/10
Rest of state	Sept. 1	Sept. 25	3/6
Youth Waterfowl Day (ducks)	Sept. 30	Sept. 30	*
Woodcock	Oct. 21	Nov. 4	3/6
Virginia, Sora Rails	Sept. 1	Nov. 9	25/25
Moorhens	Sept. 1	Nov. 9	15/30
Common (Wilson's) Snipe	Oct. 21	Nov. 25	8/16

*bag limits same as those for the regular seasons

tain and carry a migratory game bird license ($3 for residents, $6 for nonresidents) in addition to a general hunting license. This applies to resident, nonresident, junior, senior and lifetime license holders. All waterfowl hunters age 16 and over must possess a federal migratory game bird (duck) stamp.

Other than dove hunters in the early season, shooting hours for migratory game birds and waterfowl are from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

Deputy WCO Fike honored for heroism

DEPUTY Wildlife Conservation Officer Edward L. Fike, 42, Tidioute, was recognized for helping to save the life of Dale Amsler of Cranberry on June 12, 1999, by extracting him from a burning, overturned truck in Warren County. Fike, a deputy for 17 years, was accompanied by his friend Darren Lobdell, Youngsville, when the two men rescued Amsler, who was conscious but disabled by injuries.

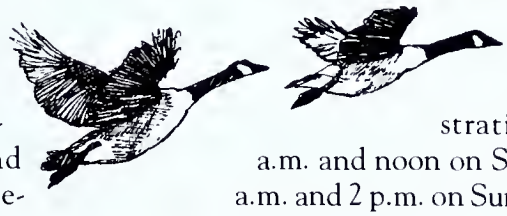


After knocking down the flames with a fire extinguisher, the men pulled Amsler from the truck and moved him to safety, some 80 to 90 yards away. Mr. Amsler was later hospitalized with a broken hip and dislocated pelvis.

"The Game Commission is proud to recognize Edward L. Fike for his bravery and selfless actions," said Keith Harbaugh, Northwest Region Director. "He put his life on the line to save another human being. He is a credit to the Game Commission and all Pennsylvanians."

Middle Creek Wildfowl Show & Pymatuning Waterfowl Expo

ON SEPTEMBER 16 and 17, the Annual Middle Creek Wildlfowl Show will be held. This popular show will feature hand-carved waterfowl decoys, other wildfowl art and much more. Gunning, decorative and shorebird decoy competitions, retriever demonstrations and the Pennsylvania State Goose Calling Championship will also be held.



The show is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., both days. The retriever demonstrations are at 10 a.m. and noon on Saturday, and 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Sunday. The goose calling championship is at 2:30 p.m.

on Saturday. National Hunting and Fishing Day will be celebrated at Middle Creek on September 24, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ongoing exhibits and activities will be offered, giving everybody a chance to learn more about and appreciate the tremendous conservation accomplishments made by hunters and fishermen over the years.

Plan now to attend the 7th annual Ned Smith Art Auction, on October 7. Viewing and silent auction begin at 10 a.m. The regular auction will begin at 1 p.m. A very nice selection of Ned Smith originals and prints complements the other wildlife art that will be available.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

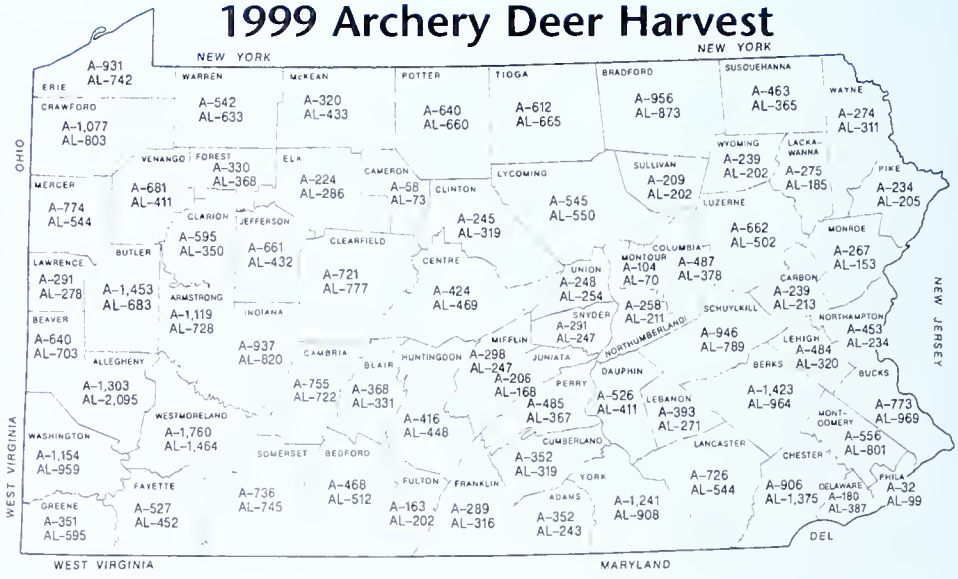
On September 15-17, the Pymatuning Waterfowl Expo will be held. Highlights include an amateur Nature Photography Contest Display, September 15-17. Judging will occur at 12 Noon on September 17. Ongoing Saturday and Sunday will be exhibits and programs on Game Commission habitat improvement projects and wildlife management programs.

At 11 a.m. on Saturday, 16th, there will be a presentation on the Game Commission's deer management program. At 2 p.m., and again at 11 a.m. on Sunday, the 17th, PGC Biologist Kevin Jacobs will present a program on waterfowl of the Pymatuning area. Duck banding and release will be included.

The Pymatuning visitors center is located near Linesville, Crawford County.

ARCHERS took 72,071 deer in Pennsylvania last year. Of these, 37,709 were antlered deer, 34,362 were antlerless. Archers — and all other hunters — will have expanded antlerless deer hunting opportunities this year, with the "Private Land Antlerless Licenses" being made available.

This year's archery deer season begins on Saturday, September 30, and runs through November 11. From October 21-24, when the early flintlock season overlaps, archers may take only antlerless deer. The late archery season runs from December 26-January 13. Archers are required to wear fluorescent orange during any overlap with the fall turkey seasons, and during the early flintlock season. For complete archery hunting details, see the current Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Digest.



Harbaugh named Northwest Region Director

KEITH HARBAUGH has been named the new region director for the Northwest Region, replacing Larry Harshaw, who was promoted to deputy executive director in the Harrisburg headquarters.

"For the past 19 years, Keith Harbaugh has been an important member of the Game Commission's team," Ross said. "Keith will be able to rely on his knowledge of the agency's past habitat improvement efforts and future needs as the Game Commission prepares to invest nearly $9 million in its statewide habitat improvement program."

As region director, Harbaugh will oversee the habitat improvement projects and all other land management activities on 186,000 acres of state game lands in the region. He also will be responsible for all information and education programs and law enforcement activities in the 10-county region.

In 1992, Harbaugh was appointed Northwest Region Land Management Supervisor, where he was responsible for the habitat improvement and land management work of six Land Management Group Supervisors and 44 Food and Cover Corps employees.

From 1983-92, Harbaugh was Land Management Group VI Supervisor. This area includes the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area, which attracts tens of thousands of visitors during the waterfowl migrations.

The recipient of the Commission's Outstanding Employee Award in 1994, Harbaugh began his career with the Game Commission in 1982, when he was commissioned as a Wildlife Conservation Officer for Clarion County.



Harbaugh served in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, from 1975 through 1978. He graduated from Union City High School in Union City, Erie County, and attended Edinboro University from 1978-81. In 1982, he graduated from the Game Commission's Ross Leffler School of Conservation with the 18th Class.

A native of Union City, Harbaugh and his wife, Vickie, live in Meadville. They have two children, Eric and Shawn.

The agency's Northwest Region is comprised of Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties. There are 91 employees and 140 Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers in the region, and 65 state game lands. The office is at 1509 Pittsburgh Rd. (Route 8), Franklin, Venango County. The toll-free number is 1-877-877-0299.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Unlike a goal, attaining a milestone is a recognition of where you are on a trip, how far you've come, and a sign that the journey isn't over yet.

Milestones

IS 50 OFFICIALLY middle-aged? There's no getting around that half-century milestone; it's in black and white on my birth certificate. I look in the mirror, though, and ignore the telltale lines around the eyes and certain puffiness at the jowls, and where the silver has encroached upon the blonde. I look at my eyes, and behind them I still feel 21, maybe even 16.

Like it or not, we all pass markers along the road of life that say we've been traveling. The more years I gain, the more I rethink what is youth and what is age. As a teenager, I was shocked when my "old" (actually 30-something) parents held hands in public. As I inch past the 50 mark, I realize how young 60 sounds. I expect to still be holding hands with my husband long past that birthday.

Such numbers and the milestones they represent have no deep import on their own. We assign meaning and value, if and when we want to. Something is deeply ingrained in people, I believe, that makes us all like to keep count. The year 2000 was a much-heralded milepost, at least in the part of the world that keeps that particular calendar; yet the number dates from an arbitrarily set beginning year based in one religion's history. Indeed, the argument about whether the millennium began last January 1 or starts next January 1 (2001) goes on and on, and we remain interested.

"Congratulations," my husband said to me last antlerless deer season. He gave me a big kiss when he came up to me, standing over the doe I'd just shot.

"Thanks," I said, "I missed her the first shot, but got a good hold on the second."

I thought he meant congratulations at finally getting a deer — I had missed two bucks, trying to shoot offhand and not faring too well. Maybe the congratulations was a bit of a scolding that I needed to practice more between seasons, and to make sure I have a solid rest for every shot. My

Linda Steiner



JOE LUKASHUNAS, Hazleton, poses proudly with his son, Joe Jr., and Jr.'s first deer, a 4-point. For both Joes, the buck was an important hunting milestone.

face must have shown some chagrin because he explained.

"I mean congratulations on shooting number 50," he said. "That is your 50th deer in your hunting career." And I got a big hug again.

My husband is the statistics person in the family. The one who keeps track of all our milestones, even remembering what wedding anniversary it is. Leave it to him to be counting how many deer I'd shot since I began hunting in 1969. He also keeps a tally of his own deer kills, from when he started hunting in 1963.

He enjoys the record keeping, and I don't mind it, although I can't build up the same excitement about number mileposts as he does. It's not a competition to see how many of any game species we shoot; he just likes to keep track of what we bag.

For himself, he records 26 bucks with a bow and 12 with a gun; and 14 does with a bow and 21 with a firearm. Yes, that's 73 deer in about 35 years, or an average of slightly more than two a year, reflecting his hunting in several eastern states.

As of the end of 1999, my husband's records show I've shot five bucks with a bow and nine with a firearm, either rifle or slug shotgun; and eight does with a bow and 28 with a firearm. He didn't tell me how close I was to the half-a-hundred mark before the '99 season started — he said that might have made me nervous. He's probably right. Or did I know it subconsciously or as a result of his veiled hinting, and that's what made me miss those bucks? Blame needs to be placed somewhere.

In 1997, he broke a 15-year string of bucks with a bow (and wrote about it in July '99 *Game News*).

One of the realizations he got when he had to enter that break in his records tally was that no one noticed but him. The numbers were just numbers, a quantitative accounting, and not a qualitative reflection of the worth of the hunting season. That, he found, was as priceless as ever.

I tell him I appreciate quality not quantity, but this may be a disguise for laziness in not keeping track of my own milestones on paper. I'm secretly glad he does the counting for me, but I do have additional milestones in my hunting that I've not kept in any notebook. I still remember and recognize them.

Like my muzzleloader milestone. Last year was the first I hunted that season in Pennsylvania. I added to that milestone by getting a shot at a deer with the smokepole (missed). I've yet to reach my first blackpowder deer milepost, but I'm confident this will occur in the future.

I've been around quite a few hunters when they passed the first-deer milestone in their hunting careers, including my dad's and my nephew's first doe with a rifle in Pennsylvania (they are both nonresidents).

Then there was the first time everyone in our group, all 10 of us, shot an antlerless deer on the first day of the season. We took photos of that gathering out by the road, and more than one vehicle slowed down to stare when we had the deer and the hunters all lined up for photos.

Another hunter I know passed at least four milestones in one day: His first deer with a flintlock; first deer while still-hunting (he usually hunts from a treestand); first deer he packed out by canoe; and the first deer he had ever taken in Pennsylvania's "Big Woods."

First milestones are important because they let you realize your journey as a hunter has more than just begun. You are now a fellow traveler with the rest of Pennsylvania's hunters, not one that recently boarded the train and still has one foot on the platform. But it's the later milestones, marked quietly and privately, that may be sweeter than the first one that goes by. Like the older hunter who, in conversation, will admit shyly but proudly, "You know, this is my 60th year of deer hunting." Every additional year another hunting season milestone is reached and, I'm sure, especially appreciated — I know many seniors who have the will but not the physi-

cal ability to still be out there.

Milestones and goals are different. A goal is a destination; once you've arrived, the trip is over. Attaining a milestone is instead, recognition of where you are on the trip, how far you've come, and a sign the journey isn't done yet. Goals are too much of competition with the temptation to brag, showing the world the puffed-up chest of achievement — or maybe I've just never been a goal-oriented person and don't understand those who are.

Me, I feel I'm process-oriented. I enjoy the traveling and doing as it happens. But I admit to looking out occasionally, as we rumble down the tracks, to see what milepost has sped by. My 50th deer, my 10th turkey, the 25th year I've hunted with my trusty .30-06 — each milestone lets me know I've journeyed beyond the previous one, and reminds me there are more markers along the way.

Is it that important to keep count? No, but I know too many hunters who can just say, "I guess I've shot a bunch of deer in my lifetime." Looking back, to them their hunting career is a blur. As much as quality is important in the hunting experience, keeping track of quantity can be important, too, because numbers are meaningful.

I'm grateful to my husband for being so diligent in his accounting of our hunting seasons. It surely does help me remember, and I'm not left in a muddle, wondering where the time went and what I did with it. I'm amazed at how well he does, keeping hunting season records with a simple, lined notebook — imagine what milestones we'd be aware of passing if he used a computer spreadsheet. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

That Rat!

Unscramble the words below then place the number of the correct answer in the appropriate blank.

A farm pond is home to the most abundant furbearer, the ____. A ____, related to mice, beavers, etc., its most obvious feature is its tail, which acts as a ____ while swimming. Its hind feet are ____, and its front feet have ____ for digging. One of its favorite aquatic foods is ____, and these are often used in ____ construction. Two to four ____ are produced in a season. Overpopulation can occur, and the best method of control is ___.

BEWEDB	1	_____	SWCAL	6	_____
STUMAKR	2	_____	DURRED	7	_____
LICTATAS	3	_____	STILTRE	8	_____
PRATINPG	4	_____	GELOD	9	_____
TONEDR	5	_____			

answers on p. 64

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Farm-Game managers are extremely busy this month, working with landowners in our public access programs, while food and cover crews continue to get game lands ready for the upcoming seasons.

SEPTEMBER brings the end of summer and the beginning of fall. Technically, this happens at the autumnal equinox, this year September 22. The word equinox means "equal night," as during this time the day is the same length as the night. Many people believe that this has an effect on wildlife behavior. I think it also has an effect on human behavior.

The kids start back to school, football season starts and, best of all, hunting season begins. Acorns, cherries and beechnuts continue to fall, and bluejays and squirrels stash these fallen nuts. Bears have started to fatten up, grouse broods begin to scatter, and the bucks have shed their velvet.

The food and cover crews are in the midst of the second planting season, and we continue to prepare game lands for the thousands of visitors we will receive in the next few months.

Week One

Work continues on a new radio tower at SGL 244. This tower will provide us with better communications for our officers and food and cover crews. Many times the radio is the only link officers and food and cover crews have to get help in case of emergencies, so anything we as an agency can do to help keep our people safe is money well spent.

The crews have continued to plow and plant food plots on game lands, but the ground has been dry. For some reason (maybe the dryness) the guys had many close encounters with bees while plowing fields. Willard Kline got stung seven times while plowing a single field.

I meet with Richard Weidow from Hanley and Bird Gas Company to inspect a pipeline location on SGL 31. Don Richards and his people from Hanley and Bird have been great to work with over the years, and they are concerned with the impact they have on the environment. I wish more companies would adopt this type of work ethic and be as will-



GROUND NESTING yellow jackets put some excitement in the job, as the crews continue their fall planting this month.

ing to establish this type of working relationship with us.

When I meet Richard he already has several routes in mind for this line, and he had already considered environmental impacts at each location. We inspect the site and discuss these options, equipment to be used, timing of work, timber damage, seeding, mulching and road access. Because Richard had done a thorough job, many aspects of this potential right-of-way had already been settled. I gave him a right-of-way application and then left to check on the progress the crew was making on nearby food plots.

SGL 31 is located south of I-80, about midway between Brookville and Punxsutawney in Jefferson County. This game lands is approximately 5,200 acres, with about 1,000 acres stripmined, much of it prior to environmental laws that require backfilling and reclamation work. Most of this was done so long ago that it has rejuvenated into good wildlife habitat. The aspen, grapevine and spruce located on the old spoil piles are great spots to kick up grouse, call in a turkey or jump a rabbit. The rest of the topography is gently rolling, with several streams and, surprisingly, minimal acid mine drainage.

There is a good access road on the game lands open to sportsmen (weather permitting) from fall turkey season until the end of the muzzleloader season. Many trails and old roads come off of this main road, providing easy walking and bicycle access. Forest cover, mostly northern hardwoods, makes up three-quarters of this game lands. The area is managed primarily for deer, bear and turkeys, although the stripmining and an old farm site on this tract allow us to maintain a rabbit management area and stock some pheasants.

Across this game lands are many scattered food plots that we plant on a rotational basis, and it seems each year we find a place to create a new one. It's the old farmland in the southern portion of this property that the crew is tilling to be planted into winter wheat.

This is a nice game lands and has great potential for much more habitat work. I could easily keep the crew working on habitat just here, but we have four other game lands to take care of in this county. With only three crewmembers (other than the Public Access Farm-Game Manager) we can accomplish only so much at each property.

Week Two

The public shooting range on SGL 72 has gotten so much use that we must already replace backboards and some of the framing. The crew takes half a day to make these repairs, pick up litter, and cut the grass, only to be met by a couple of disgruntled individuals who show up for an afternoon of shooting. We try to schedule shooting range work when we expect minimal use, such as weekday afternoons, but conflicts like these happen. With the heavy use this range is getting, we'll need to come back again this month to make repairs.

Gary and I travel to SGL 283



FOOD PLOTS, such as this switchgrass, on the southern end of SGL 31 in Jefferson County add diversity to this public hunting tract.

to inspect a bridge replacement on a township road there. We meet with a representative from Palo Construction and discuss using the extra fill from this project to create a couple of parking lots for hunters. This company has been good to work with, and accommodate us by using their equipment to create two new parking areas free of charge. While we are there, we clean and replace damaged or stolen PGC signs along the road and on the other parking areas. This happens frequently. The individuals who do this don't seem to realize that the money used to replace signs comes from hunting license dollars. Each sign we post costs around 80 cents, and although that doesn't seem like much, it adds up when hundreds of signs have to be replaced. I would rather use that money for habitat work.

Rick and his crew from Eagle Contracting have been expanding a wetlands for us on SGL 74. They have been hired through the "Partners for Wildlife" program to reestablish an original wetland area. They have been working at this site for more than a week, and are making good progress. I stop just in time to assist the crew as they install a water level control device in the new dike.

Lee Jordan and I meet Eric Carlson from Headwaters Charitable Trust to discuss a habitat project on one of their properties near Sigel. This property is open to public hunting through the Farm-Game Program, and has one of the nicest wetland areas in Jefferson County. It supports a lot of waterfowl as well as many species of songbirds. As we tour the area we discuss putting in some orchards, warm season grass and food plots.

We decide to design a habitat plan to address some of the deficiencies we have noted. Eric will include this area in a wildlife grant proposal to secure some of the funding needed for lime and fertilizer, and I will supply the design, equipment and manpower needed to accomplish the work. Working together with landowners in our public access programs is a win-win situation, especially for wildlife and hunters.

I continue to spot flocks of turkeys everywhere within my district, especially on SGL 195 in southern Jefferson County. These flocks of up to 50 birds are made up of several old hens and their young. This year's poults are nearly adult size now and hard to distinguish from adults.

Week Three

Gary, Tom and Willard are preparing to sandblast one of the metal buildings on SGL 63. It needs repainted and some gutter work done before winter. This is the time of year to catch up on these types of projects. We have gates that need painted, large wooden signs that need stained, and we must also repair a furnace and extend an underground water pipe. The crew will finish up the fall planting this week and then clean up the farming equipment for storage until next spring.

The guys on the crews continue cleaning and replacing signs on our hundreds of game lands parking lots and access roads. The crew will also clean leaves from culvert pipes and remove any fallen limbs or trees on our access roads.

We keep our access roads clear in case of a fire or any other type of emergency. Grassy access roads in heavily forested areas are important to wildlife, and also provide hunters with easy walking access to the more remote parts of game lands. Here in my area, we have started to post small signs at our gates indicating road numbers. These numbers make it easier for the crew and for sportsmen. An example would be road number 631. This indicates road number one on SGL 63. Road number 7211 would indicate road number 11 on SGL 72. Now, instead of instructing the crew members to go to the third gate on the left past the second parking lot along the township road, it's much easier to find, for instance, road number 6311.

Gary's crew has begun painting the boundary line along SGL 74. This game

lands is 6,500 acres and the crew paints white marks on trees along 41 miles. Everett and his crew will come over to assist, as this is a long boundary. The crew must climb many hills and cross lots of creeks on this 41-mile adventure.

The Farm-Game managers are busy this month. They have talked to 176 different landowners about our public access programs, pheasant stocking, law enforcement, regulation updates, landowner licenses and safety zones. They have checked and replaced Safety Zone signs on 68 properties in our Farm-Game Program. Tom and Lee are popular as they answer many questions, get a lot of interest in our programs, and become real busy signing up new properties this time of year.

In the evening I attend a deputy meeting in Jefferson County and spend a couple of hours on a plant identification tour. We look at the difference between the many species of shrubs we have planted for wildlife on SGL 244. I also show them some of the habitat work the crew has accomplished in our small game area.

Week Four

Calls about shooting at night are common this time of year, and I help the WCOs patrol some of the problem areas. Out on patrol in Clarion County, I watch a pickup pull off a township road and stop at the edge of a field. The driver has his headlights pointing into the field, and after several minutes turned them off, but kept the engine running. I get my vehicle out of sight and parked, then grab my flashlight and binoculars and slowly make my way back towards the truck. I walk closer, staying in the shadows, and find a good spot to sit. I could hear the driver talking, but needed to get closer to find out what was going on. As I edged my way up to the vehicle, it became clear that the man was just talking to his mother on a cell phone.

We finish up the wetland work on SGL 74, and Everett, Gary and I attend a workshop on planting warm season grasses. It was informative and provided some good information by experts from other states. The morning was spent in the classroom, and the afternoon on one of LMO John Dzemyan's game lands for some practical training.

Gary and I investigate a section of game lands where someone had tacked up posted signs. This area was along an old utility line, and we felt someone was trying to stake a claim to a section they wanted exclusively to themselves. This caused confusion with hunters on preseason scouting missions, who then called me.

Gary knows this section of game lands well, as he has painted the boundary many times. We located the true boundary line, verified it was game lands, then tore down the posters. I notified the deputies and WCOs of this situation so they could watch for these signs to reappear.

I return to this area later, looking for treestands. I find two ladder stands tied to a tree with rope. These stands are legal, as they have not damaged the trees, but they may not be left here all year. They must be removed after hunting season because it's unfair for someone to leave a stand in the woods year-round, preventing others from hunting from that spot. I note the location of these stands and come back to check on them after the season. If they're still here, we'll remove and destroy them.

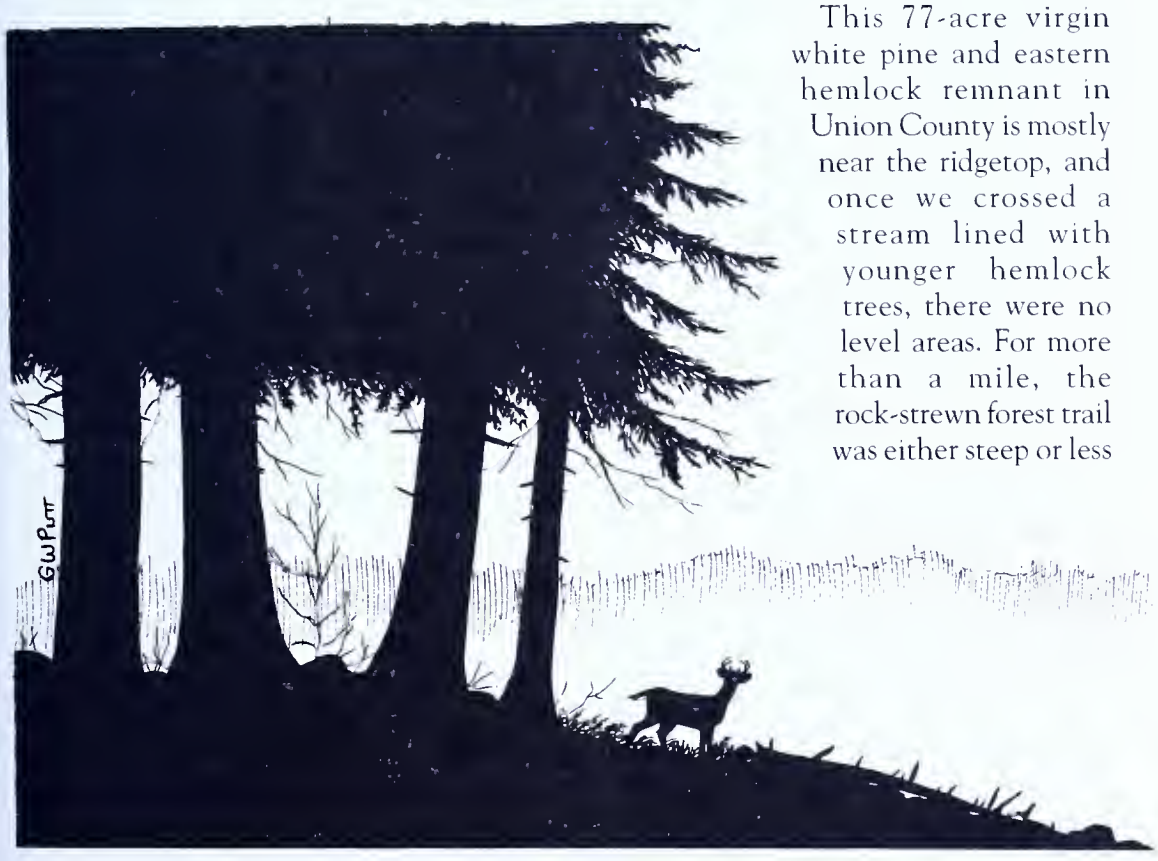
I attend a meeting with Jim Fagley and "Bud" Davis from EADS Engineering, to go over some changes on the township bridge replacement project on SGL 72.

The end of the month again brings my "power meeting" with foremen Everett and Gary, and our end of month land management reports. This month also brings our annual law enforcement update training at the Northwest Region Office, presented by Law Enforcement Supervisor Jim Egley. All salaried and deputy WCOs must attend this training. We learn recent law changes, court rulings, policy updates, and have open discussions on concerns we have in the field. □

It's not called Penn's Woods for nothing; next to New York State, Pennsylvania has the most old growth forests in the Northeast.

Visiting Old Growth

SOMETIMES YOU have to work to see an old growth forest. That's what my husband Bruce, our son Dave, and I decided one summer day as we labored up the steep, rocky, north side of Paddy Mountain. We were following the unmarked Joyce Kilmer Trail through the Joyce Kilmer Natural Area in the Bald Eagle State Forest.

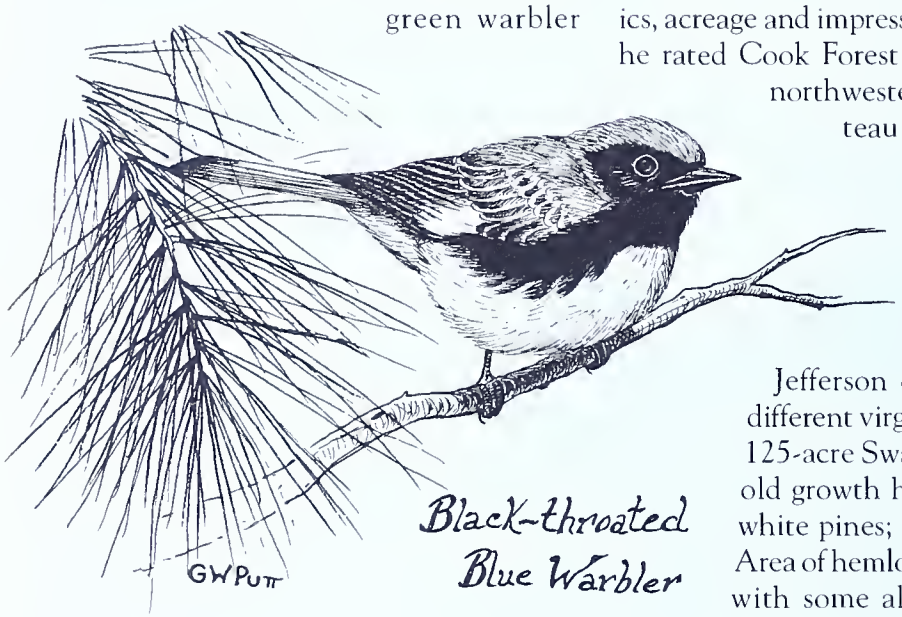


This 77-acre virgin white pine and eastern hemlock remnant in Union County is mostly near the ridgetop, and once we crossed a stream lined with younger hemlock trees, there were no level areas. For more than a mile, the rock-strewn forest trail was either steep or less

steep. Only dogged determination to see the big trees kept me going.

It was no accident that the white pine and hemlock trees in the natural area had never been cut. Back in the days when logging was done with horses, the conifers that grew on such steep, rocky ravines were often spared. Large rocks surrounded those I saw in the natural area, so I preferred to sit beside the trail and admire what I could see. Meanwhile, Bruce and Dave quickly disappeared as they picked their precarious way around, through and over the rocks in search of the largest trees and best photographic possibilities.

That was when I heard and saw a few of the deep forest birds — a pair of hermit thrushes, a black-throated green warbler



Black-throated Blue Warbler

accompanied by a begging offspring, an eastern wood pewee, a black-throated blue warbler and a common raven.

Eventually, the men returned, and we slowly picked our way back down the rocky trail. We agreed that of the 27 old growth sites we have visited in Pennsylvania, the Joyce Kilmer Natural Area was the most strenuous. "Too strenuous," Bruce Kershner told me several weeks later.

Kershner, a short, bearded, energetic man of 49, lives in upstate New York and is a national authority on old growth forests. He and Robert Leverett of Massachusetts, another old growth forest expert, are writing a guidebook on accessible old growth forests in the northeastern United States. Leverett is covering the New England states while Kershner is concentrating on New York and Pennsylvania.

Next to New York State, Pennsylvania has the most old growth forests in the Northeast, Kershner says. So, as we drove to the two forests I wanted to show him — Alan Seeger and Detweiler Run natural areas in Rothrock State Forest — Kershner gave me his assessment of the old growth places he had visited so far in Pennsylvania.

. Based on a combination of the aesthetics, acreage and impressiveness of the trees, he rated Cook Forest State Park on the northwestern Allegheny Plateau as number one in the state, an A+ grade. The 6,668-acre park in Clarion, Forest and Jefferson counties has three different virgin timber tracts: the 125-acre Swamp Area of mostly old growth hemlocks and a few white pines; the 70-acre Seneca Area of hemlocks and white pines with some almost 300-year-old pitch pines; and the wonderful 100-acre Cathedral Area, also primarily old growth white pines and hemlocks, including the second tallest white pine tree east of the Rocky Mountains. Much of the rest of the park is mature second growth with old growth characteristics, and is the closest we can come to experiencing what was once known as the "Black Forest of Pennsylvania."

Six places made Kershner's A grade category. The first was Woodbourne Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary, a 200-acre virgin hemlock and northern hardwood forest in

Susquehanna County. It's the largest virgin tract in northeastern Pennsylvania, according to its present owners, The Nature Conservancy. It's also, Kershner feels, the most beautiful tract of old growth in the state after Cook Forest State Park.

Previously owned by the Francis R. Cope, Jr. family, the entire 648-acre sanctuary was given to The Nature Conservancy by Cope, his wife, and his daughter, the recently deceased Teddy Gray. Coincidentally, Gray and her father, who was vice president of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, also fought to save Kershner's third choice, the Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Areas and Heart's Content Scenic Area in the Allegheny National Forest back in the 1930s. Realizing then the importance of saving such places, Gray wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on "Observation on the Vertebrate Ecology of Some Pennsylvania Forests," including her own Woodbourne and the Tionesta Tract.

The 4,131 acres of old growth hemlock and beech forest in the Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Areas, along with the 122 acres of hemlock, white pine and beech in Heart's Content Scenic Area, are all the old growth that is left of the six million acres of beech/hemlock forest that once covered the Allegheny Plateau. Unfortunately, 800 acres in the Tionesta tract were flattened by a tornado in 1985, and regeneration is being set back by deer browsing. Then, too, beech bark disease has killed many trees.

Kershner visited not only the already well-known old growth remnants in Pennsylvania, he also actively searched for new places. As co-founder of the Western New York Old Growth Forest Survey, he has discovered dozens of previously unknown ancient forests.

Near Dingmans Falls in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, he found old growth along Fulmer's Falls near the Child's Picnic Area, which he classified as outstanding. That's because he, like me, thinks that the combination of old growth and waterfalls is especially appealing. So, of course, my favorite place in Pennsylvania — Ricketts Glen State Park, with its 27 waterfalls and old-growth hemlock and hardwood forest — also rated an A with Kershner.

The other As went to the lovely 120-acre Hemlocks Natural Area in Tuscarora State Forest and the stately 500-acre Snyder-Middleswarth Natural Area in the Bald Eagle State Forest. Both have easy trails through remote stream valleys of virgin hemlock and white pine forests.

Kershner's B+ rating went to wooded river valleys on the lower Susquehanna River that are owned and protected by Pennsylvania Power and Light, Kelly's Run Natural Area in Lancaster County and Otter Creek Natural Area in York County. I agree with Kershner that these, too, are very special places.

Sweet Root Natural Area in Buchanan State Forest is "very primeval," Kershner said, but it rated only a B because there is so much die-off. A 140-acre old growth conifer forest on SGL 141 near Jim Thorpe also had die-off in the treetops, and for that reason was also assigned a B. When we visited it several years ago, however, the Glen Onoko area, with its several waterfalls, reminded me of a miniature Ricketts Glen.

Other places that rated a B that have smaller acreage but beautiful trees, in Kershner's opinion, are two southwestern Pennsylvania sites — Ohiopyle State Park's Ferncliff Natural Area, which includes 20 acres of old growth along the falls and rapids of the Youghiogheny River, and the Laurel Hill State Park Natural Area's four acres of old growth hemlock along Laurel Hill Creek in Somerset County.

Forest H. Dutlinger Natural Area in Susquehannock State Forest also rated a B, because its 158-acre tract of virgin hemlock and hardwood forest is as difficult to reach as the Joyce Kilmer Natural Area. Only after a mile climb up a steep ravine do visitors reach the old growth. Still, I re-

member it as a lovely place. With such strong opinions, I wondered what Kershner's reaction would be to my two A choices.

"Wow! This is incredible. This is special. It has a feeling of farther south because of the tall rhododendron," Kershner said as we walked the three-quarter-mile circular trail in the Alan Seeger Natural Area. The 118-acre remnant is best known for its virgin hemlock and interlocking canopy of 20-foot tall rhododendron shrubs along Standing Stone Creek.

Based on the aesthetics, acreage and impressiveness of the trees, Cook Forest State Park on the northwestern Allegheny Plateau has one of the best old growth forest sites in the state.

But Kershner was even more impressed by the old growth hardwoods. Altogether, he counted seven species — red oak, yellow birch, chestnut oak, white oak, tulip, sugar maple and black gum — along with white pine and hemlock. As we walked, he enumerated old growth characteristics on the tree species.

"There's old-growth tulip senescent bark," he pointed out, showing me the balding bark at the bottom of the tree. "The higher the balding goes, the older the tree is. The same is true of the moss layer. A tree must be 120 years old for moss to grow two feet up the trunk." Then he found a large white oak tree. "Look at its buttressed roots. And the moss has grown four feet up the trunk. That makes it between 250 and 320 years old."

Other signs of old growth, Kershner says, are unusual growth forms such as a noticeable twisting of the trunks, the presence of the giant white bracket fungus, Berkeley's polypore (*Polyporus berkeleyi*), and the lifting off of bark plates, especially on yellow birch and white pine trees. All in all, Kershner was impressed by Alan Seeger and gave it an A.

Detweiler Run Natural Area, only two and a half miles by foot from Alan Seeger, is harder to get to, which is why it is one of my favorite retreats. This 463-acre area contains 185 acres of old growth white pine, hemlock and white oak, according to the State Bureau of Forestry, but almost immediately Kershner pointed out an old growth yellow birch.

By then, time was running short, and Kershner counted the rings of fallen trees with frenetic haste. But even though he moved quickly, nothing escaped his sharp eyes. "Look, jack-o'lantern mushrooms," he said, pointing to a clump of the bright orange mushrooms growing at the base of a white oak stump. "Listen to the raven. Look at the moss. Here's an American chestnut branch." I could barely keep up with him. "Nature gives me energy," he said.

With many more places to visit in just a few days, he could hardly stop to savor each place. Still, I was amazed at how quickly he grasped their essence. At first he was disappointed by Detweiler Run Natural Area, as we descended the Axehandle Trail into the old growth and then followed the Mid-State Trail through the natural area, because it skirts the edge of the old growth. But when the trail finally began winding among giant trees and piles of moss-covered rocks, he was satisfied that this place, too, is special and incredible.

As we finished our walk, he summed up his feelings for old growth forest. "The wisdom of the earth is inscribed on the boughs of ancient trees. Death equals life in an old growth forest. It creates new life and a series of lives." □

Some hunting scents on the market are designed to attract hunters not necessarily deer. Here's the dope on . . .

Making Sense of Scents



BOWHUNTERS are constantly being bombarded with new products that supposedly offer instant success. Most of these products hit the market with great fanfare only to silently disappear a few months later. However, the one product line that has not only continued to grow but seems to have exploded is cover scents and attractor lures.

The scent industry was born years ago to produce lures for trappers. While I was growing up during the 1950s, trapping wasn't just a pastime, it was a way to produce much needed income for many rural families. My dad and I trapped muskrat, mink and raccoons during the winter season and trapped foxes all year for the $4 bounty offered at the time. Trapping was a serious business, and to be successful it was necessary to understand lures and how to use them properly. Fur prices fell sharply as the demand for fur products declined, and when the bounty on foxes was dropped in 1965, trapping for them drastically declined.

But then, just when the production of scents seemed doomed bowhunting was growing by leaps and bounds and the production of scents and lures for hunting became big business. During the past decade the manufacture and marketing of scents of every type and description has developed into a major outdoor industry.

Today, advertisements for scents and lures guaranteed to make the biggest buck in the mountain cross four lanes of traffic to meet you in the local mall parking lot at high noon leap from the pages of nearly every hunting magazine. However, scents or lures, like any other hunting tools, must

be selected wisely and used properly. It's important to realize that some of the products on the market have no real value or application, that their sole purpose is to generate sales for the manufacturer. Misapplied or improperly selected, scents cannot guarantee success but can and often do guarantee failure. To better understand the proper selection and use of scents let's put some logic behind this mystery.

Using Scents

Scents are used for two basic purposes. To mask human odor or to act as an attractor to lure an animal to the hunter's location. This automatically breaks scents into two categories, cover or masking scents and attractor scents.

Animals have learned to associate human scent with danger. The detection of human scent immediately places them on alert, and once alerted they will do one of several things. Depending upon conditions they will immediately leave the area. Other times they will remain motionless until they see, hear or otherwise positively identify the location of the intruder. In the event the hunter is moving, the animal may remain motionless until the hunter leaves the area before resuming its natural movements. The scent of a hunter often causes game to move from the area without the hunter ever realizing it was there.

For this reason the elimination or masking of human scent is extremely important. However, cover scents should never be used in place of good hunting sense. Instead of simply attempting to cover up human odor it's far better to reduce it or eliminate it. Shower before each hunt using unscented soap. Do not use shaving lotions or scented deodorants. Wash your hunting clothes in scent free soap and allow them to air dry if possible. If you're using a dryer, never add scented fabric softener sheets.

When going to and from my stands I always dress lightly and carry my hunting clothes in a backpack. This minimizes perspiration and keeps clothes fresh. The best footwear for scent reduction is rubber, knee high boots. They greatly reduce your scent trail. Several manufacturers now offer hunting clothes and footwear containing a carbon layer that traps human scent, preventing it from being released into the air. Never expose your hunting clothes or hunting boots to foreign smells such as gasoline, oil or smoke.

Cover Scents

After every possible precaution has been taken to eliminate human odor the final step to ensure scent free hunting is the application of a good cover or masking scent. However, the selection of a masking scent must be done with some logic. Remember, the purpose of a cover scent is to do just that, to cover. The more popular cover scents are fox, skunk, raccoon, cattle, pine, cedar and earth or earth blends. I prefer the earth or earth based products. I apply earth scent to the soles of my boots and the cuffs of my pants (if not wearing high rubber boots) as I enter the woods, and I reapply it when I'm within 150 yards of my stand.

Few hunters realize the importance of masking or covering their trail. I've witnessed deer react to a hunter's trail up to four hours after the hunter had passed. Often they refuse to cross the hunter's path, turning, instead, and going back the way they had come. In contrast, I've witnessed deer crossing fresh trails where earth scent was used, and give no indication of detecting anything out of place. A distinct advantage with earth scent is that it cannot be over-applied. It smells like dirt and is as natural as it gets.

The opposite is true of scents that tend to mask your scent with more powerful odors, such as skunk, fox or coon. While they definitely mask human odor, they also tend to send up a red flag that something is amiss, especially if too much is used. Deer alerted to a possible visitor will be looking for the source of the scent and will be on

guard for any sound or movement, making the hunter's job of remaining undetected more difficult. The earth based products act strictly as cover scents and possess no attraction qualities whatsoever. In my opinion that makes them the perfect cover scent.

Once scent elimination and scent masking has been completed, the second step is the proper selection and use of attractor scents, to draw game within bow range.

Attractor Scents

Attractor scents are designed to attract deer within bow range of a hunter's stand. Sounds simple, but nothing could be further from the truth. Don't expect a deer busting from a thicket during a deer drive to suddenly get romantic notions just because you sprinkled a couple drops of doe-in-heat around. Attractor scents are the most misunderstood and misapplied hunting aid on the market. Using too much will do more harm than good, and they do not work every time or under all conditions. Let's look at the type of attractor scents available and how they should be used.

During the past decade the manufacture and marketing of scents of every type and description has developed into a major outdoor industry.

Curiosity Lures

Curiosity or food lures come in a variety of flavors, such as corn, acorn or apple to mention a few. Two other effective curiosity lures are vanilla and oil of anise. Both have a sweet smelling fragrance that deer find attractive. None of these lures are designed or intended to draw deer from long distances or to be used for laying down a trail. They are simply natural scents designed to draw a deer's attention to a specific location on the ground and distract it momentarily within shooting range. Remember, a deer will hesitate only long enough to satisfy its curiosity then it will move on. When using curiosity lures, place them carefully to ensure any deer stopping to investigate will be within your shooting lane and range.

Urine Lures

Urine lures are made from both buck and doe urine and serve two different purposes. Doe urine is used to signal that a deer has been in the area and everything is all right. If used to lay a trail it may or may not arouse a deer's curiosity enough to cause it to follow the trail to find the other deer. Trails laid with doe urine will attract both bucks and does. Lures made from buck urine are normally used in conjunction with mock scrapes. The purpose of these scrapes is to make a buck think a strange buck has moved into its territory. The buck will seek out the stranger and challenge him to the right to breed. The success of these types of setups, however, is mainly dependent upon the buck to doe ratio. In Pennsylvania our buck to doe ratio is out of balance in many areas, eliminating much for the desired competition for breeding rights, thus making mock scrapes less effective.

Laying a Scent Trail

Let's assume you have selected a hunting site, have your stand located and want to lay a scent trail. First and foremost your stand should be located in an area of high deer activity. The purpose of the scent trail is to simply draw any passing deer within bow range. Don't expect to go to a location with few deer and attempt to lure them into the area.

Scent trails are laid out using either foot-

pads strapped to the bottom of your boots or by dragging a scent line. If you choose to use footpads keep the pads positioned over the ball of your foot and not across the instep. This places your body weight over the pad, ensuring it makes good contact with the ground and provides even scent distribution. Keep all lures in a sealed plastic bag and always use rubber or plastic gloves to avoid contaminating the lure with your scent. Avoid getting lure on your clothes or boots; remember, you want to attract the deer into shooting range not up the tree with you. Getting lure on yourself could draw the attention of any approaching deer directly to you, making it difficult, if not impossible, to get a shot.

A common mistake made by many hunters is to lay a scent trail in the wrong direction. An animal follows scent from the weakest to the stronger scent, so you want the strongest scent near your stand.

Keeping where you want to take the shot in mind, walk past your stand for approximately 100 yards, cutting as many deer trails as possible. Then apply scent to your footpads or drag line and walk to your selected spot where you want to take the shot. Repeat this procedure in two or three directions, always starting beyond your stand and passing your selected shooting spot each time. Obviously, scent must be reapplied to the pads or drag line for each new scent trail. As the scent is weakest at the starting point of the trail, any deer crossing your scent trail should follow it past your stand as opposed to away from it.

Once the scent trails have been laid, return to the spot where you want the deer to be positioned when you take the shot. Apply a concentration of one of the aforementioned curiosity lures at the spot you wish to stop the deer. Spray three or four light mists of doe urine in a two-foot circle around the curiosity lure concentration.

You now have created several trails that lead from the surrounding area past your treestand. As the trail passes your stand any deer that is following it will continue to your preselected shooting spot. If everything goes according to plan the concentration of curiosity lure will stop the animal and keep it focused on the ground long enough for a shot. Sound simple? Well it isn't and it doesn't always work as planned.

Using this method my wife brought in three bucks in one afternoon, but on other occasions I watched deer cross fresh scent trails and completely ignore them. This method seems to work best in times of heavy deer movement or during pre or post rut periods. When does are in heat and the rut is at its peak it's extremely difficult to compete with the real thing.

Conclusions

Scent elimination and the use of masking or cover scents is the single most important thing a bowhunter can do to improve chances for success. Using cover scents, making false scrapes and laying down scent trails are all techniques that work when conditions are exactly right. The problem is it's difficult to determine when those conditions are right. A deer's nose is much more sensitive than ours. As a rule it's always better to apply too little than too much when it comes to cover and attractor scents and lures. Using too much creates an unnatural situation and will have a tendency to alarm more deer than it will attract. The same is true when laying down scent trails. Laying too many scent trails in a given area simply causes the deer to be more alert.

Attractor lures work, but if not correctly used they can be more trouble than they are worth. Remember, of all the scents available to bowhunters, common sense is the most important. □

From electronic powder tricklers to precise chronographs, you can bet there's something that will allow you to improve your handloading and shooting.

Specialty Tools

By Don Lewis

"HERE'S SOMETHING you might be able to use," a friend said as he placed a strange looking gadget on my loading bench. "I don't know who made it or where it came from. I'm not even sure what it is and, worse yet, it doesn't work. It was found on a shelf in my late father-in-law's workshop."

"There's nothing I like better than a gift that has no name, no purpose and won't work," I replied while examining the metal device. "However, I do know what it is. It's an electric powder trickler with a limit or cut off switch."

"Just how do you know that?" he asked sarcastically.

Helen Lewis



DON LEWIS chronographing a .22 BR Remington using the CED Millennium chronograph. Unit stores data that can be printed out later.

"Well, it has a hollow aluminum shaft with inside threads protruding above a metal chute. Because it's electrically operated, a motor turns the aluminum shaft and powder kernels trickle out. You can see a feed hole in the shaft inside the powder chamber. As the shaft rotates slowly, powder falls into the hole and the spiral threads push it out and it falls on the chute."

"Well, you might know what it is, but do you know how to fix it?"

In a matter of a minute or so I removed two screws and pulled the entire assembly out of its case. A broken rubber band was dangling from a fairly large pulley on the hollow shaft. I installed a new rubber band on the shaft pulley and onto a small pulley on the motor shaft. When I pushed down on the limit switch, the unit operated smoothly. A handle on the chute forced the chute down on the limit switch to start the motor. When the chute was lifted, the spring-loaded limit switch cut off automatically.

The chute was placed directly over the scale's powder pan. A conventional powder measure was set to throw a charge about

a grain or two below the desired weight. When the chute was manually pushed down, it activated the limit switch and powder began to flow out of the hollow shaft. The operator had to know when to lift the chute to stop the motor. There were several methods for using the trickler but none were completely foolproof. Once a technique was mastered, powder charges could be weighed to the exact tenth.

RCBS's new electronic powder trickler works in conjunction with the RCBS Pro Digital powder scale. It's a major improvement over the one my friend gave me. It communicates with the Pro Digital scale via infrared data transmission. The scale weighs the powder as the powder trickler dispenses it. It gives the same results as my old trickler, but it's automatic. When the exact powder charge is in the powder pan, the trickler shuts down.

The powder charge weight is stored in the scale's memory. For instance, if loading a series of different powder weights with the same powder, start with the lowest weight, such as 45 grains. Load the desired number plus one extra. The scale should read 45 grains. If the next charge weight is 45.6, hold the dispenser button down on the trickler until the scale reads 45.6 and then press memorize. This new weight is in the scale's memory. If 46 grains is desired, load the number needed plus one charge in the powder pan and repeat the process. Pushing the memorize button will cause the trickler to memorize whatever weight is displayed on the scale. The RCBS powder trickler can dispense up to five grains to finish a charge weight, but it's best to throw powder charges that are one or two grains under the desired weight.

The RCBS powder trickler is a rather sophisticated piece of equipment. It takes time to get the scale and trickler working as a team but, once set up, dump a powder charge into the pan, push the dispense button on the trickler and the exact desired weight will be metered out. It takes the work out of powder weighing.

Chronographs are no longer an expensive luxury. It's safe to say that a chronograph is a must for any serious handloader. Maybe I'm going too far out on the proverbial limb by saying it's next to impossible to work up a load without knowing its muzzle velocity and the standard deviation (SD) for each group fired. The velocity and SD tell the handloader exactly how a particular primer/powder/bullet combination performs. Knowing the velocity is a must, and the SD shows the uniformity of a group's velocity. Without this information, working up a load combination is pure guesswork.

Only a few years ago handloaders had to depend on factory velocity figures, which are derived from special barrels and with shots fired under controlled conditions. Although the factory velocity figures are accurate, they don't represent velocities obtained from regular hunting rifles. This is where the home chronograph changed the picture. No longer do handloaders have to use average velocity figures; they can now get their own with any load combination. In many cases, the figures obtained at home are not the same as shown in reloading manuals, but that doesn't mean they are incorrect.

Ammunition makers fire thousand of rounds while developing a load combination, and the velocity figure shown is the average velocity from that particular test. The handloader is usually firing a hunting rifle, and it's likely the measurements used for distance from muzzle to first screen and also screen spacing might not be exact. Even an error of one inch can change the reading. Also, the hunting rifle's chamber and barrel dimensions may not be the same as what the factory used. This means that the velocity figure for a particular load obtained from a home chronograph pertains only to the rifle it was fired in. The same load combination fired in other rifles will normally differ by as much as 100 fps.

There are no absolutes in obtaining velocity figures. Ten cartridges precisely

loaded and then fired from the same rifle will probably show seven or eight different readings. Five shots fired from a .22-250 of mine registered instrumental velocities at 14 feet of 3,795, 3,740, 3,784, 3,755 and 3,754 fps. Extreme spread is 55 fps (between the high and low velocity), and the standard deviation is 23 fps. The SD shows the uniformity of the velocities. In this case, a majority of the shots were within 23 fps above or below the average velocity, which is 3,766 fps, and that's a good SD reading.

My first chronograph used wire screens and required an interpolation table to figure the instrumental velocity. The wire screens had vertical and horizontal wires that were closely woven, and even a 17-caliber bullet would break the continuous wire. The problem stemmed from a poorly designed screen hookup that used inexpensive alligator clips. Each shot used two screens that were not repairable. A bad connection wasted both screens that cost about 20 cents apiece. It wasn't so much the money as the frustration. I was in the process of designing my own hookup when I purchased an Avtron K233 chronograph. It used plastic screens and had a positive hook up. It seldom failed, but also required a table to transform the digital readout figure to feet per second, and it also consumed two screens for each shot.

While the K233 was truly a fine instrument, Oehler's 32/61Chronotach (replaced by the Model 35P) was superior. The 32/61 used two skyscreen boxes with electric eyes that picked up the shadow of the bullet as it passed over a slit in each box. The eye in the first box started a very accurate electric clock ticking at 419,430 ticks per second at 10-foot screen spacing (twice that fast at 5-foot screen spacing), and the eye in the second box stopped the clock. The 32/61 then converted the number of ticks (pulses) counted into feet per second. The day of replacing screens was over.

Competitive Edge Dynamics is now offering their CED Millennium chronograph. It also uses skyscreens and has an extra large LCD display (figures are about one inch high and 1/8-inch wide) that's built into the CED's cover or lid. Flip up the cover and the easy-to-read 16-button custom keypad provides all relative information at a single glance.

The CED is complete with an on/off switch, but also has an automatic shutdown mode that is activated if inactivity occurs for 10 minutes. There is no loss of data when the CED shuts off automatically. It operates on a 9-volt alkaline battery, and all functions are controlled from the keypad. Replay, edit, omit, standard deviation, high velocity, low velocity, extreme spread, average velocity, clear/reset, speaker and power factors, plus other options are available by pushing the appropriate key.

The speaker key provides the user with the capability of hearing each data entry recorded. The speaker gives the velocity figure one and a half seconds after the shot is fired, and it's also shown on the LCD.

The dual lens skyscreen setup I received has screens spaced two feet apart on a folding mounting rail. The skyscreen sensors lock on each end of the rail with a quarter turn of a knob (no tools needed or screws to lose) secures the skyscreens. The rail is threaded and works nicely with a conventional camera tripod. The 5-inch wide white diffusers above the sensor provide an excellent diffusion of the sun, making an artificial cloud above the bullet. The sensors need to see a dark projectile (bullet) against a light background (diffusers).

The CED can be used for shotguns and bows. It's a compact unit, and it takes only a minute or two to attach the cables. The CED Millennium Chronograph also stores all data, permanently if desired, by shot strings (shot string number shown on LCD display) which can be printed out later through a computer. The CED must be manually turned off before plugging or unplugging the skyscreen cables or the PC serial cable. If this isn't done, all stored data will be lost. Data must be stored in memory before turning the CED off. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Lancaster, York and Berks counties have the highest number of farms in Pennsylvania with 6,015, 2,240, and 1,105, respectively.

The number of accidental firearms deaths in the nation reached an all-time low of 900 in 1998 — the fewest since record keeping began in 1903. Unintentional firearms-related fatalities compare with 41,200 deaths related to motor vehicle incidents, 16,600 falls, 9,000 poisonings, 4,100 drownings, 3,700 due to fires or burns, and 3,200 due to choking.

Legislators in the Iowa House did an unexpected about-face and withdrew support of a bill that would have introduced dove hunting in the state. The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America's Iowa Committee has begun a renewed effort to get a dove hunting bill passed in 2001.

While Ontario sportsmen are trying to repeal a ban on spring bear hunting, anti-hunting groups are now attempting to end grizzly bear hunting in British Columbia. With a healthy population of 10,000 to 13,000 grizzlies and increased bear attacks, government officials have opted to continue with a grizzly season designed to take about 300 bears annually.

Extinct in Arkansas since 1900: passenger pigeons, ivory-billed woodpeckers and Carolina parakeets. New since 1900: coyotes, cattle egrets, roadrunners, armadillos, house finches, trumpeter swans and scissor-tailed flycatchers.

A Louisiana man was fined $18,000 after pleading guilty to illegally killing a lynx that was reintroduced into Colorado. The man forfeited an all-terrain vehicle and a .270 rifle used in the poaching incident. The individual was also sentenced to 100 hours of community service, a year's probation, and lost his hunting privileges in Colorado for life. The Division of Wildlife reintroduced 41 lynx into southwestern Colorado in 1999, as part of an effort to recover the native species in its former habitat.

It's estimated that hunters took 322,715 snow geese in the states participating in the special spring season last year.

Biologists tallied 193 bald eagles — 107 adults and 86 immature birds — in 29 Ohio counties last winter, surpassing the previous record of 149 in 1998.

Raccoons are responsible for the largest percentage of rabies cases since 1990. From 1990 to 1998, a total of 35,262 cases were reported in the U.S.

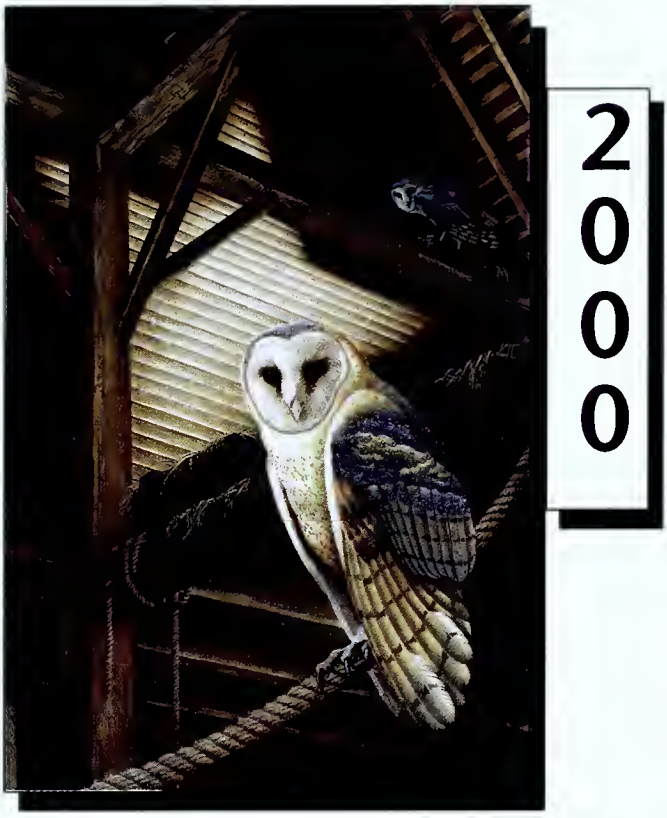
Hunters in West Virginia took 993 bears during the 1999 season — down from the record 1,082 taken in 1998.

Answers: 1. WEBBED, 2. MUSKRAT, 3. CATTAILS, 4. TRAPPING, 5. RODENT, 6. CLAWS, 7. RUDDER, 8. LITTERS, 9. LODGE.

Numbers: 2, 5, 7, 1, 6, 3, 9, 8, 4.

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STAR BARN OWLS, by Barbara Banco, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Rare birds in Pennsylvania, barn owls are found in the more open areas of the state, where they prey upon rats, mice and other small mammals.



Star Barn Owls

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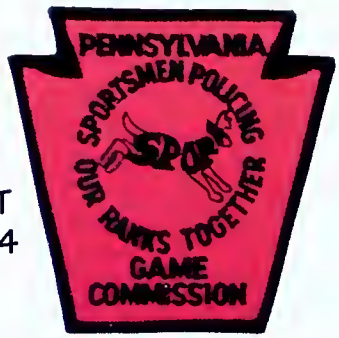




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OCTOBER 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial

One Tall Order

LAND MANAGEMENT has long been an extremely important facet of the Game Commission, yet it hasn't gotten as much publicity as it should. As a result, most people have only vague ideas of what this agency does to manage and protect wildlife, and to provide for the needs of hunters, trappers and other users. In recent months, Land Management Officer (LMO) Brad Myers has done a great job with the "LMO Diary," describing on a week to week basis what he and his Food and Cover Corps do to manage state game lands and public access properties in Jefferson and Clarion counties.

Readers of Brad's column have no doubt already come to learn that a tremendous amount of long range planning goes into coordinating manpower needs, maintaining equipment and having all supplies on hand, so everything gets done efficiently and at the proper time. More to the point, it's the hard working and talented Food & Cover crews that have made our public hunting grounds the envy of every other state in the nation.

What Brad and his crew accomplish in their land management group (Clarion and Jefferson counties) in the Northwest Region is very much what other LMOs and their crews do throughout the state. In all, the Game Commission has the state divided into 29 land management groups. Generally, each group is made up of two or three counties and is administered by a land management officer. Most land management officers worked as wildlife conservation officers before transferring into the land management positions, and they still assist with law enforcement duties during the hunting seasons. Working for each LMO are Food and Cover Corps members, only 200 or so in all, charged with taking care of more than 300 state game lands and working with more than 30,000 private landowners in our Farm-Game and Safety Zone progams. In each region, a land management supervisor oversees the land managers in that region.

To see what Brad and his crews — and other land managers and their crews — have done to get everything ready for the start of the major hunting seasons, check out this month's LMO Diary, beginning on page 48.

For an even better look at how game lands are managed — perhaps even a game lands where you hunt — check out page 39, under "Upcoming PGC events," for the game lands tours being offered this month. While the tours vary, most offer participants a chance to drive on roads normally closed to motor vehicles, and either signs are erected or officers are on hand at designated stops to explain the habitat management techniques being employed at the particular sites. Held at a time of the year when the leaves are near their fall-color peak, these tours make for a great family outing.

Of course, the best way to explore what's being done for wildlife on game lands is to check them out during the hunting and trapping seasons. In the coming weeks and months, while you're hunting, trapping or just hiking around our state game lands, take notice of the fields and what's been planted where; take note of the cuttings; and don't overlook the clean parking lots, the well maintained shooting ranges, the informational signs posted. All this didn't just suddenly appear, by accident. A lot of hard work by many dedicated employees — and countless volunteers — went into making game lands so inviting, for your outdoor enjoyment. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

Hello from the other side of the world. I'm writing from Jakarta, Indonesia, and just wanted to drop you a quick note and thank you for a great magazine. I've been receiving *Game News* for about 35 years, and read it from cover to cover.

C. Lozinger,
Jakarta, Indonesia

Editor:

After reading in the January issue that it costs $32.90 to put a pheasant in a hunter's game bag, why doesn't the Game Commission require hunters to purchase a pheasant stamp to help offset these costs?

G. Rearick,
Clarion

Instituting such a stamp would require an act of the legislature, and it was considered when the current license fee schedule was being developed. For what the agency is doing to improve pheasant hunting, read Duane Diefenbach's "How Many in the Bag," in the July issue, and Jack Roger's "Computer-Age Ringnecks" in this issue.

Editor:

Ken Hunter's cover on the June issue may have focused on the chipmunk, but I feel the star is the box turtle. Incredibly detailed, the cover speaks to Mr. Hunter's talents.

F. Krauss,
Chester Springs

Editor:

Just read "A Middle Creek Tribute to Dad," from the July '98 issue, for the third time. My dad passed away when I was 16. He worked three shifts in the coal mine, so we didn't have much time together, but I love reading about other father/son teams sharing time together.

J. Fraser,
Harwick

Editor:

How about an easy way to e-mail letters to *Game News*? I enjoy the "Letters" page and have often felt like sending my own, but mailing a letter seems like too much work these days. Also, would it be possible to have the *Digest* posted on your web site and to be able to buy a hunting license on-line?

We've published a few letters, such as this one, that have come in via our web site. A drawback, though, is we don't know who sent the letter. You'll be glad to know, however, that we expect to be selling licenses and Game News, *fine art prints, books and other agency publications and products on-line by January, and we're working on getting the* Digest *on-line.*

Editor:

I can't believe young, inexperienced hunters are allowed to shoot any deer during buck season. My early hunting memories with my father were of skill, patience and safety — not shooting a deer.

As a father of four, I agree it is important to introduce youngsters to the outdoors; but like this?

R. Chojnacki
Fairview

Editor:

I've been reading *Game News* since I was a child and my dad subscribed. I especially enjoyed Linda Steiner's "Happy Trails," in the August issue.

More a hiker than a hunter, I have hiked all of the AT through PA twice, as well as Maine to Georgia, and more than 1,000 miles of other trails in the state.

Another good source for hiking informatioin is The Keystone Trails Associaton, Box 251, Cogan Station, PA 17728-0251.

M.V. Musser,
Lititz

Editor:

I would like to commend the Game Commission officers in Greene and Fayette counties for making this year's Greene County Envirothon a great success. The officers went out of their way to make the entire event fun and educational, and the students really enjoyed it.

W.S. Hegedis,
Greene County Conservation District
Waynesburg

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

1999
DENNIS KRAINER

Front Stuffer Squirrel Hunting

By Chris Henderson

IT WAS the morning of what, for me, was the last Saturday of the regular small game season. Actually, there was one more Saturday left, but I wasn't going to be able to hunt, so this was it. It was chilly, but not too bad, and I could see that it was going to be one of those windless, sunny mornings that make for great squirrel hunting.

Before long, as only they can, a gray squirrel materialized out of nowhere on the trunk of a nearby tree. My thumb automatically went for the safety on my old Mossberg 20-gauge, with which I've hunted for 36 years. Then I remembered. I wasn't using it. I had a muzzleloading 12-gauge instead. I brought the hammer from half to full cock. Fortunately, the squirrel stayed around while I got everything sorted out. When the smoke cleared, there was a nice fat gray for my game bag.

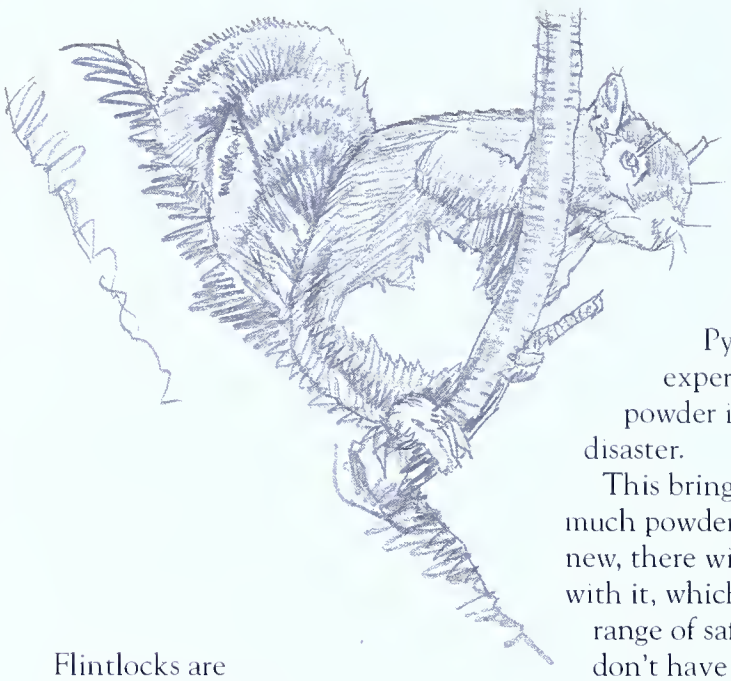
For the past 36 years, ever since I was 12, I have eagerly awaited the opening of each year's squirrel season. Squirrel hunting is, without question, my favorite form of hunting. I even prefer it to deer hunting. Luckily, I live near some excellent squirrel woods along the Allegheny River in Armstrong County. In addition to grays, I often spot fox squirrels and even an occasional black.

Given my love of both squirrel hunting and muzzleloading, it is not surprising that I eventually decided to combine the two of them. For many years, muzzleloader manufacturers have been producing small caliber squirrel rifles. I've had a .32 for a long time, but I've never been particularly successful with it. Eventually, I decided to try using a muzzleloading shotgun.

For some reason, shotguns are often overlooked by blackpowder hunters. This is unfortunate, because they are a pleasure to own and shoot. They make great small game guns, too. As is the case with any outdoor sport, hunting with a front-loading shotgun requires several decisions. The first involves gauge. Although others are available, the 12 is far and away the most popular. Most accessories on the market are geared toward the 12, too.

You also must choose between a single or a double-barrel model. A double, of course, offers the advantage of a quick second shot, which is out of the question with a single. On the down side, cleaning a double is almost like cleaning two guns, when one is more than enough. Also, doubles are usually somewhat more expensive than singles.

I currently own three muzzleloading shotguns, all 12-gauges. One is a CVA double, which I built from a kit. The other two, a Navy Arms Morse and a CVA Trapper, are singles. I purchased the Morse, which is now discontinued, and the CVA Trapper as finished guns. My guns are all percussion, and that will be the focus of this article.



Flintlocks are available, but they are not often seen in the woods.

There is really nothing mysterious about loading these guns. All you really do is build a shotgun shell inside the gun's chamber. In fact, anyone who loaded shotshells 25 or so years ago will recognize all the components involved.

The first step is to pour in the premeasured powder charge. Remember to never use smokeless powder in one of these guns. They may look like they can handle it, but they can't. You must use black powder, or a black powder substitute, such as Pyrodex or Black Canyon. To experiment with smokeless powder in any amount is to invite disaster.

This brings us to the question of how much powder to use. If you buy your gun new, there will probably be a manual with it, which will provide you with a range of safe, dependable loads. If you don't have a manual, several good books on the market include shotgun load tables.

After the powder charge comes the over-powder wad. For this, you can use a paper card wad, or a plastic, one-piece wad column. There's a little wrinkle here, though. Before you buy a box of ordinary plastic wad columns, remember that they are made to fit in a shell casing, not a gun barrel, which makes them

Grouse Trends

We have a couple of different surveys of grouse hunters in Pennsylvania. To estimate the number of hunters and grouse harvest, we do a random sample of all license buyers. We have about 200,000 grouse hunters who spend approximately 1,000,000 hunter days and bag an average of one bird apiece.

Our other grouse hunter survey is done by a dedicated group we refer to as cooperators. This group keeps records of their days afield in pursuit of ruffed grouse, and we use their flushing rates, in flushes per hour, to monitor trends in huntable grouse populations. Last season these cooperators reported 11,428 hours hunted with 16,698 flushes and bagged 1,175 grouse. Last year's cooperator average flushing rate of 1.49 was slightly above the 35-year average of 1.45 and was up 17 percent from the previous year's rate of 1.27. This may indicate the beginning of an upswing in Pennsylvania's grouse population. Our huntable grouse population had been dropping from a population peak in 1994. The average cooperator hunted 30 hours, had 25 flushes and took three birds during the 1999-2000 hunting seasons. — *Bill Palmer, PGC biologist*

To become a grouse survey cooperator, contact Bill Palmer at RR 1, Box 55-B, Spring Mills, PA 16875.

undersized. It may prove difficult to get a good gas seal when you use them in a muzzleloader. Fortunately, plastic wads made specifically for muzzleloaders are now available.

If you don't use plastic, you'll need to place one or more filler wads between your over-powder wad and the shot charge. Although now obsolete for shotshell reloading, these wads are still being manufactured with the muzzleloading market in mind. It is of vital importance that all wads, regardless of type, be seated firmly. There cannot be gaps in the wad column, or a bulged barrel can result. The large end on a shotgun's ramrod makes this a simple task, as it keeps the wads nice and straight in the bore.



Next comes the shot charge. Just as with shotshells, you have to decide what size shot you are going to use. I lean toward number 6 for squirrels, although 4s and 5s will work very well, too. The biggest determinant of the weight of the shot charge is the amount of powder used. A good rule of thumb is to use the same amount of shot by volume, not weight, as your powder charge. The loading manuals referred to earlier can be very helpful here, too. It should be kept in mind that the weight of the shot charge plays an important role in overall pressure, so don't exceed recommended maximums.

The final component is an over-the-shot card. This serves the obvious purpose of preventing the shot from rolling out the end of the barrel. It may be tempting to use over-powder cards for this, but it's not a good idea. They're too thick. Thin, over-the-shot cards are available at a low price.

When all of these steps are completed, if you could see through the barrel, you would, for all practical purposes, be looking at a shotshell. The only thing missing would be the primer. That function is, of course, performed by the percussion cap.

Your next step is to fine tune your load so that its shot pattern meets your needs. Many muzzleloading shotguns come unchoked, and the only control you have over the pattern is varying the powder charge, wad column and shot charge. For squirrels, I like to use just about the heaviest acceptable load that still shoots a fairly good pattern.

Trial and error is about the only viable course of action.



Today, choked guns are available for the front stuffing enthusiast. Some, like the CVA Trapper, come with interchangeable choke tubes. You can also get an existing barrel threaded to take tubes. While genuine purists may disagree, I think choke tubes are great. With the ability to choose chokes, I can use the aforementioned volume to volume loading for just about all my squirrel hunting.

Although I truly love shotgunning with a muzzleloader for squirrels, I must admit that the sport does have a few drawbacks. For one thing, you have to carry an awful lot of stuff with you, including powder, shot, caps and a variety of wads. My first few times out I felt sort of like a walking Christmas tree. Also, even for the experienced shooter, reloading is somewhat time consuming.

There's a major safety factor

involved in the use of a muzzleloading double-barrel. Let's say you fire the left barrel several times without firing the right. This can cause a gap to develop somewhere in the right barrel's load column. To fire the barrel with such a gap can cause the barrel to bulge or even explode. For safety's sake, when you reload one barrel, always reseat the load in the other one, too. Once you do it a few times, it will become second nature.

Like any other blackpowder guns, shotguns must be cleaned quickly after use, as both black powder and Pyrodex leave corrosive residue. Black Canyon is the only muzzleloading powder I know of that allows you to postpone the cleaning operation.

Many hunters minimize the effectiveness of blackpowder guns. Actually, a muzzleloading shotgun can do just about everything a modern gun can do. With the right load, which must be arrived at through experimentation, they have an effective range of about 40 yards, and that's not bad at all. As far as pattern is concerned, you actually have more possibilities for variety than with a modern shotgun using shotshells. Once again, you must experiment a bit, until you arrive at the right combination of powder, shot and wads. Because many folks opt for the convenience of plastic wad columns, here's a tip. As a general rule, the deeper the slits in the sides of the shot cup, the wider the pattern. If you use a solid cup with no slits, and they're available, the shot charge acts almost like a slug, spreading out very little throughout its effective range. Nowadays, plastic wad columns made especially for muzzleloaders are available, and they perform quite well. In the end, though, you're going to have to rely at least in part on trial and error to get the pattern you want. Once you find a good load for a certain type of hunting, be sure to jot it down for later reference.

There's really something special about blackpowder hunting for bushytails. The sight and smell of gunsmoke, coupled with the golden days of autumn, all add up to something really hard to beat.

I bagged two additional squirrels that Saturday morning, and saw some others that were out of range and never drifted my way. Finally, I decided to head back to the car. It's been my experience that squirrel hunting is really good only in the morning and evening. On the way out, I missed a running squirrel, which I probably would have gotten with the Mossberg, and a grouse, which I probably would have missed with any gun. I'd had a nice change of pace and a productive morning of hunting. I had three squirrels, and I "got lots of shootin'," as my dad used to say. I knew there were still lots of squirrels in my favorite patch of woods. I would be back in the evening, with the Mossberg, to close out the season. □

Cover Painting by Gerald Putt

IT ALMOST SEEMS as if you can reach out and touch the waves or hear them slap against the side of the boat on this month's cover. Canvasbacks are classified as diving ducks, but unlike many divers, "cans" feed mostly on submerged vegetation and, therefore, make good tablefare. Canvasbacks are the fastest flying of the large ducks — they are approximately the same size as mallards — and their long, sloping foreheads and bills make them unique among other ducks. Canvasbacks usually occupy larger and deeper expanses of water for feeding and resting. A population decline in recent years has mandated strict hunting regulations for the big ducks.

Why Do You Guys Wear Guns?

By WCO Chuck Arcovitch
Susquehanna County WCO

EVERY YEAR Roger Thomas invites me to speak to his classes at Mountain View High School. With tailored uniform, polished boots and duty belt, and a professional, but approachable and friendly attitude, I try to make a favorable impression on the young adults. When I walk into the classroom, however, all eyes immediately focus on me and then my sidearm. Soon the question comes, "Why do you guys wear guns?"

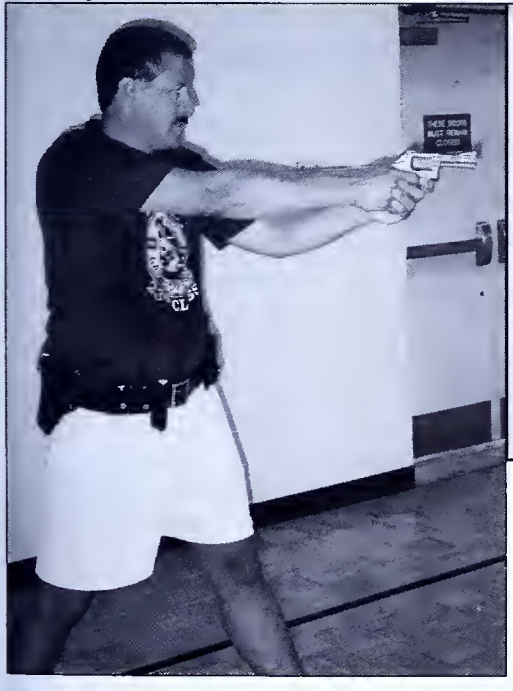
I actually enjoy answering this question, because it gives me an opportunity to inject realism and truth about law enforcement officers into young lives permeated all too often by misinformation and outright hyperbole from movies and television.

Although we wildlife conservation officers occasionally use our issued sidearms to dispatch injured or sick animals, its primary purpose is for self-defense. We are trained to use the firearm to counteract deadly force directed toward another individual or ourselves. Deadly force being that which may cause serious bodily injury or death.

"Yeah, but you're only a 'game warden,' you're not a cop."

I explain that during the hunting seasons, almost all of the people we deal with are in possession of loaded rifles or shotguns. Some of them also carry concealed handguns. Usually

Bob D'Angelo



Bob D'Angelo



GAME COMMISSION officers are trained — as in this self-defense instructor training class with dummy guns at the Ross Leffler School in Harrisburg — to use the firearm to counteract deadly force directed toward another individual or themselves.

these are people we don't know. We may be encountering a man who just went through a bitter argument with his wife, a person who has serious psychological problems, or a person under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. Those situations are bad enough, but add a loaded firearm and you have an extremely dangerous situation for the officer.



Bob D'Angelo

THE FIREARM is part of a WCO's uniform equipment and should not intimidate honest, decent people. WCOs are well-trained in the rules that govern the way and times they can use force — especially deadly force.

Also, sometimes a person we cite for a game law violation has a more serious criminal record. At this point in my talk I usually add an actual experience.

My first dangerous encounter involved a struggle for a loaded shotgun. Fortunately for me, I was able to gain control of the firearm and defuse the situation.

In another situation, WCO Don Burchell and I tried to remove a tame deer from a private property while a father and son cursed us, taunted us, and tried everything else in their power to get us to lose our composure and do something rash. The father, in rather unflattering language, even invited Don to fight him. The man's son filmed the entire incident on video, and I remember telling Don that the young man was someday going to kill someone. Sure enough, about a year later he shot and killed his father. If the presence of our firearms had not been a deterrent to further violent action that day, who knows what could have happened?

"Did you ever have to shoot anyone?" someone invariably asks.

"No, thank God." I reply. "I did have my hand on my firearm on several occasions, but, fortunately, the need to draw it never occurred. I hope that I never have to use my firearm in self-defense, but if I do, I pray that I'm able to use it as I've been trained to do. The police shows on TV are far from reality. The glorification of violence used by law officers, especially with guns, is highly exaggerated. There are rules that govern the way and times law enforcement officers can use force — especially deadly force."

I usually sum up this section of my program by telling the kids that if they run into us in the field, remember that we are their friends and are there to help them and to protect our wildlife resources. The firearm is part of our uniform equipment and should not intimidate honest, decent people. I hope that now they understand why we wear guns. □



Two Amazing Days

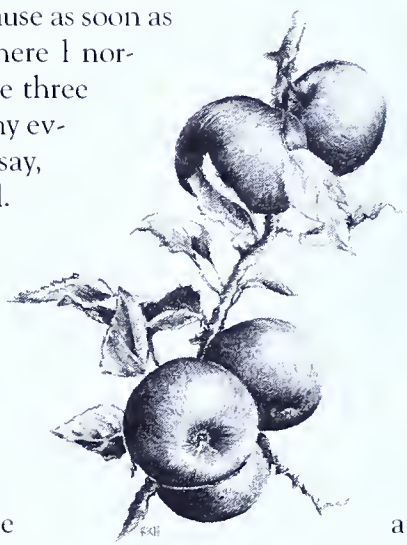
By Dale Black

EVERY HUNTER has seasons when nothing seems to go right. Last year was one such season for me. If I was hunting in one treestand, I'd watch helplessly as deer walked single file under another on the other side of the field. I've often heard that deer seldom look up, but not the deer where I hunt. On two occasions deer spotted me in my treestand. The ultimate indignity, however, was to have a nice buck approach my stand from a direction that provided no shot, stand directly below me and eat apples until finally scenting me, and then crane his head to look directly up at me. As our eyes met for that brief moment, I thought I saw a smirk on his face.

With the approach of a new season, I made all of the usual preparations with the hopes of better luck. Living in Susquehanna County farm country, I usually hunt within a half mile from my house. For scouting, I often depend on the annual habits of the deer, as they tend to use the same trails and scrape spots each year. I no-

ticed this year, however, that the apple trees in our area were either loaded with apples or had none, and I intended to take full advantage of this early season food source.

Opening day started out like a repeat of the previous year. I positioned my treestand near my woodlot's only oak tree, which was loaded with acorns, only to see deer out of range, feeding under an apple tree at the edge of the woods, where I had intended to stand in the evening. Hunting there later was no better, because as soon as I had climbed up to where I normally sit, I turned to see three deer that had watched my every move. Needless to say, they didn't stick around.



Undaunted, I took to the woods again on the following Friday, to hunt from the same apple tree. After only 15 minutes in the tree I heard a deer snort behind me. Thinking I might still be in my rut of bad luck, I reminded myself of how quickly things can change while hunting. And as it turned out, things were, indeed, about to change.

After another 15 minutes a doe materialized through the fog about 40 yards away, apparently intending to have apples for breakfast. I had no chance to draw as she approached with a nervous glance toward the strange figure in the tree. She walked to my 10-yard marker, turned broadside and bent down for an apple. I came to full draw and aimed at a point high on the back, to take into account the sharp angle from which I was shooting. She then turned, quartering away, and stopped in the open at 13 yards. The arrow flew true, and as she made that "mad dash" so typical of a well-hit deer, I knew she wouldn't go far.

Bowhunters customarily wait at least a half hour to follow a hit deer, but I could contain myself for only 15 minutes. I had watched her first 50 yards of flight and had a pretty good idea of where I might find her. Instead of picking up a blood trail I followed her general direction of travel and looked for the downed animal. As I walked in that direction, carefully scanning the ground in front of me through my binoculars, I had gone no more than 125 yards when I spotted the white belly fur of the deer. The arrow had penetrated the liver and one lung, producing a quick kill — and she had even run towards my home. I could have walked back to the house and used my pickup to bring her back, but I was glad to be able to drag her back myself. Besides, that's what hunting is all about.

The next day, Saturday afternoon, I took to the woods in pursuit of a buck. This time I was in a newly placed ladder stand five yards into the woods, behind an apple tree that was on the fringe of a large grassy field. I thought this was the best location because the deer could enter the field from several different locations but gather under the apple tree.

An hour before sundown a doe walked up to the tree from my right, and just as shooting hours were nearly over I spotted a single deer walking toward me. The deer walked at the very edge of the woods, just into the field, stopping at times to sniff overhanging branches, and it was coming right towards me. As it got closer I noticed it was sporting a 4-point rack. Before long the buck approached a scrape in front of me, under a low hanging branch of the apple tree. I would have to wait until he passed the trunk before I could shoot. I

came to full draw, but the buck stopped directly behind the trunk, hiding all but his nose and tail. My arms were getting tired, but having been in this predicament before, I knew just what to do.

Still at full draw, I eased the bow down to rest on my knee to relieve the weight of it. Then I just had to lean over to peek around the tree to see what he was looking at. I was certain he hadn't winded me, but, instead, I found he was eyeing up my ladder. After another 15 seconds or so, he finally looked away and started walking toward the scrape. This placed him in plain view, broadside and at 10 yards. I slowly raised my bow and placed my closest sight pin just behind his shoulder.

Just as with the doe the day before, the arrow hit its mark, but I was now concerned about which way he would run. If he continued on his present course he could escape into a thick swamp. I was relieved when he ran a half circle through the middle of the field and then crossed a fence into a horse pasture. With darkness rapidly approaching, I immediately left the tree and began to look for the deer. I knew the hit was good and that he wouldn't go far, so I ruled out trying to find the trail in the grass and, instead, quietly made my way to where he had crossed the fence. I didn't quite get there when I spotted the white belly of a downed deer. He had run about 150 yards after the broadhead pierced both lungs.

I've never been one to measure my hunting success by the fullness of my game bag. Simply being in good health and enjoying the thrill of the hunt is enough to keep me content, but as I walked over to my trophy, I couldn't help but look heavenward to thank God for my two amazing days. ☐

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Thoughts From the Trapline

By David F. Benner

IT WAS an early Monday morning when my 18-year-old son, Nathan, and I arrived at our third site where we had "gang" set for fox. Gang setting is where several traps are placed close to one another, with the idea of catching furbearers traveling together. Because foxes often run in pairs, this can prove fruitful.

"I'm pretty sure there's either a coon or a gray in one of the traps, and I think there's a red fox in another," I said while peering through binoculars. I had often read about people catching doubles at gang sets, usually a pair of coyotes, foxes or coons, but I had never heard of anyone catching a red and gray fox at the same time.

We figured the red had been caught first, because they shy away from gray foxes. The gray fox would then have approached the other set, not worrying at all about the red. Who knows if that's how it happened, though. Once the sun goes down, only fox and raccoon hunters see what goes on in the forests and fields. As for trappers, we can only assume.

Years ago, Nathan and I would arrive at our fox sets only to find them sprung or dug up. With experience, we've eliminated most of our problems. A fox approaches a set using its nose, and anyone who takes

this lightly is only asking for trouble.

Traps must be boiled and treated properly before using them in sets. Placed in buckets with lids and boiled with sumac drupes and pine needles, our traps carry no human odor. After this treatment, every effort is made to keep the traps from becoming contaminated with lures or any other foreign odors.

Now, Nathan and I believe that most of our traps had been dug up because we allowed lure to get on our fingers and then, even when wearing cotton gloves, transferred to the traps. The odor causes a curious fox to dig up the trap, without being caught.

As for traps being sprung, we learned that trap mechanisms must be adjusted. We filed the trigger and receiver on each of our traps and then tightened the nut on the pan, so that it could move up and down without any wobble.



I'VE BEEN ABLE to see him take pride in handling furs the best that he can.

Someone told us years ago that covering traps with anthill dirt keeps them from freezing. We found this wasn't true, but we did find that anthill dirt was much lighter than the soil we had been using around our traps. Traps covered with anthill dirt go off much faster than when covered with clay soil. After covering our traps with anthill dirt, we sift a little natural soil over it to blend it in. After using this technique, most of our foxes are caught high up on the foot rather than on the toes like many of them were before we started using anthill dirt.

We gather anthill dirt in the summer, spread it out on a piece of plywood and place it in the sun to dry. We then sift it into 5-gallon buckets. With this sifted soil, we've found we can prepare dirthole sets in about half the time that it used to take us.

Non-target catches are another problem. With low fur prices, many of these non-target furbearers are more numerous than ever. It seems that every time a perfect fox set is made, an opossum or skunk blunders into it. Trying to avoid these animals used to be difficult for us, but we've found a few ways that seem to help prevent them from ending up in our traps.

First, we don't use bait anymore. We use only gland lure along with fox urine. Most of the time, but not always, opossums and skunks will avoid a trap set if they smell fox.

In addition, we no longer set traps near fencerows. Although foxes like to run fencerows, so do many non-target animals. We now set all of our traps in open fields, paying attention to the wind. Our trap might be quite a distance from a fencerow, but if the wind blows the scent of our lure towards these spots, we'll catch foxes.

Nathan and I hope these tips will make the art of trapping just a little easier for anybody new to the pastime. As for Nathan and me, we had a good season last year. We didn't get rich, but we spent a lot of time together. It's rewarding to see Nathan take pride in handling furs and learning the responsibility that trapping teaches. This is worth more than any amount of money.

Computer-Age Ringnecks

By Jack Rodgers



Bob D'Angelo

IT WAS a big foxtail field, the kind that's almost impossible to find these days, and it seemed to stretch forever. Most people don't even notice a field such as this. Perhaps they are too intent on their everyday lives, increasingly frenetic in this computer-age. Or, if they are hunters, they might scan them quickly for whitetails then zoom off, intent on a treestand or turkey hollow. But not me. No, for as long as I can hunt I will look at such fields and think about one thing: pheasants.

My friend Lee Ercolani and I found ourselves crisscrossing this field one November morning. It was just after dawn and cold as Christmas in Canada. We had both been schooled in the old-time technique of leaving no clump unkicked, and slowly worked our way through the field. Shards of frost crackled and flew in the chilled air, and we were thankful for our cheap cotton gloves.

Lee seems to always have the knack for making first contact. This time he stepped right on three hens. He yelled in surprise as the birds rocketed out of the weeds, sending water droplets from frost into the air. Conditioned from years of practice, we both yelled "hens" and watched the birds wing off towards a distant cornfield.

We looked at each other and nodded. Our hearts were now pounding in anticipation, and each step was measured. I swear my left boot actually made contact with a rooster. He vaulted into the sky, clawing and flapping and cackling. He looked like he was four feet long and breathing fire, and that might explain why my first two shots missed. Calming down, knowing that my buddy was watching, I folded the rooster with the third shot.

"Man, I didn't think you were going to get him," Lee yelled, and took a step towards the downed bird.

Four other pheasants crashed out of the foxtail. Two were hens and two brilliant roosters. Lee jumped back and opened fire, cleanly dropping one of the cockbirds in a shower of feathers. Moments later we held both roosters with shaking hands.

Many of you reading this have similar memories. But I'll bet there is one major difference. This hunt didn't happen in 1968 but rather just last year, and right on one of our fabulous Farm-Game projects.

I know pheasant hunting used to be much bigger than it is now. I grew up in Berks County, and we had the birds roosting all over our yard like noisy Christmas ornaments. For a kid back then, the right of passage wasn't a big buck or a boss gobbler, but rather a long cockbird tailfeather sticking out of a floppy orange game vest. But the fact is that our wild pheasant population remains a shadow of what it once was. There are a variety of factors to explain why this is so.

According to Scott Klinger, a Game Commission biologist studying Pennsylvania's farmland wildlife, one big reason we can't expect numbers of ringnecks like we had in the '60s and early '70s is, quite simply, that there is less room for them.

"We lost 716,000 acres, paved over, in the heart of our pheasant land," explained Klinger. "You just can't expect to return to the same numbers while losing that kind of habitat."

But paving for progress wasn't the only reason. Other changes took place as well. Small changes, ones not as easy to see as a strip mall. "There were a lot of subtle changes in land use," explained Carl Reigner, head of Pennsylvania's Propagation Division. "People always say that things haven't changed all that much, but they have. They just sneak up on you. I always say it's like your kids growing. You never notice it until one day they're taller, and you say, 'when have you grown?'"

These indirect changes were large factors in the decline of our wild pheasants, but perhaps not the primary culprit. The loss of CRP habitat robbed the ringneck of nesting cover, and many biologists think this was the primary reason for the drop in population.

"I feel I'm on pretty firm ground in saying that the loss in nesting cover is the biggest single factor in pheasant decline," asserted Klinger. "And it's not just pheasants. A whole bunch of other bird species with similar nesting requirements are in trouble as well. It's one of the most distressing declines in conservation history."

But, fortunately, that doesn't mean

Bob D'Angelo



WE'LL probably never have ringnecks in the numbers we had in the 1960s, but hunters can still enjoy pheasant hunting for stocked birds on state game lands and Farm-Game projects. Birds raised with less human contact at the commission's game farms seem like wild pheasants.

we have no pheasant hunting left. We just don't have them crashing into kitchen windows or strutting all over yards anymore. But there is some good hunting left. You just have to, well, hunt for it.

Another Saturday last season found Randy Hepler, Richard Greenley, Lee and me working some foxtail that bordered cornfields. The foxtail offered good roosting cover, and we hoped to surprise a rooster or two before they began feeding.

As we worked the cover, I spotted a briar bed intertwined in the weeds. I walked towards it and gave it a sound kick. I just knew there wasn't going to be a pheasant in that patch. Heck, it was just too obvious. But there was, and he got stuck trying to get out. The ringneck thrashed and squawked and generally raised all sort of rumpus, while I stood bug-eyed and stared.

Now, let me explain. I had already shot teal in Delaware and a few grouse, but that thing so unnerved me that when it finally extricated itself from the brush, I missed it three times. Not even a feather. I could have caught it in my hands if I wasn't carrying that battle-scarred 12-gauge of mine.

Fortunately, I wasn't the only one to miss a rooster that morning. But by noon we had six ringnecks and called it a day to go watch a football game. And, truth be told, I could remember some Saturdays from my formative pheasant years when we didn't have six roosters by kickoff.

"It's a shame more people don't hunt for them," exclaimed Scott Klinger. "I've been around some, and in my opinion Pennsylvania does as good a job as anyone in providing quality pheasants to hunt."

This change in attitudes among Pennsylvania's released pheasants has come about through a lot of hard work. According to Carl Reigner, Pennsylvania has undergone several changes in pheasant producing philosophy. "A couple of things happened to get us up to the high numbers we were producing in the early 80s," he explained. "First, we stopped raising quail in 1974, and that gave us more room to produce pheasants. Then we stopped raising turkeys in 1982, because, quite frankly, we didn't need to."

In 1985 the Commission began raising pheasants with less human contact, and even though these birds were no more able to reproduce without nesting cover than wild ringnecks, they acted just like wild birds.

Because of those changes that gave game farms more room for ringnecks, and because of the falling wild populations of pheasants, the Game Commission raised and released upwards of 400,000 birds in 1984. But then things changed.

"In 1985 we began raising a bird that would be more able to survive in the wild, to try to stem the loss of wild pheasants. Of course we learned that habitat is the key," Reigner said. But even though these birds were no more able to reproduce without nesting cover than wild ringnecks, one thing remained true: They were virtually indistinguishable from wild pheasants. "We switched things around quite a bit," said Reigner. "We cover the pens and handle the pheasants only twice before they are released. Workers don't speak around the birds, to reduce the amount of imprinting that takes place. We increased the amount

of room allocated to each bird from around 20 feet to 70 feet per bird. Before, we kept the weeds down so we could find the birds. Now we plant corn, sorghum and weeds to better acclimate them to the areas where they will be released. There are also roosting structures, so the birds learn to roost off of the ground."

The result is well worth it. I helped to stock some of these "new" pheasants, and these birds act wild. If anyone thinks that you have to shake these birds out of a crate and watch them walk around like chickens, well, you're sadly mistaken. The birds I released practically tore the crates apart trying to get out and powered away in all directions. As the land management officer told me, "There's no steering them."

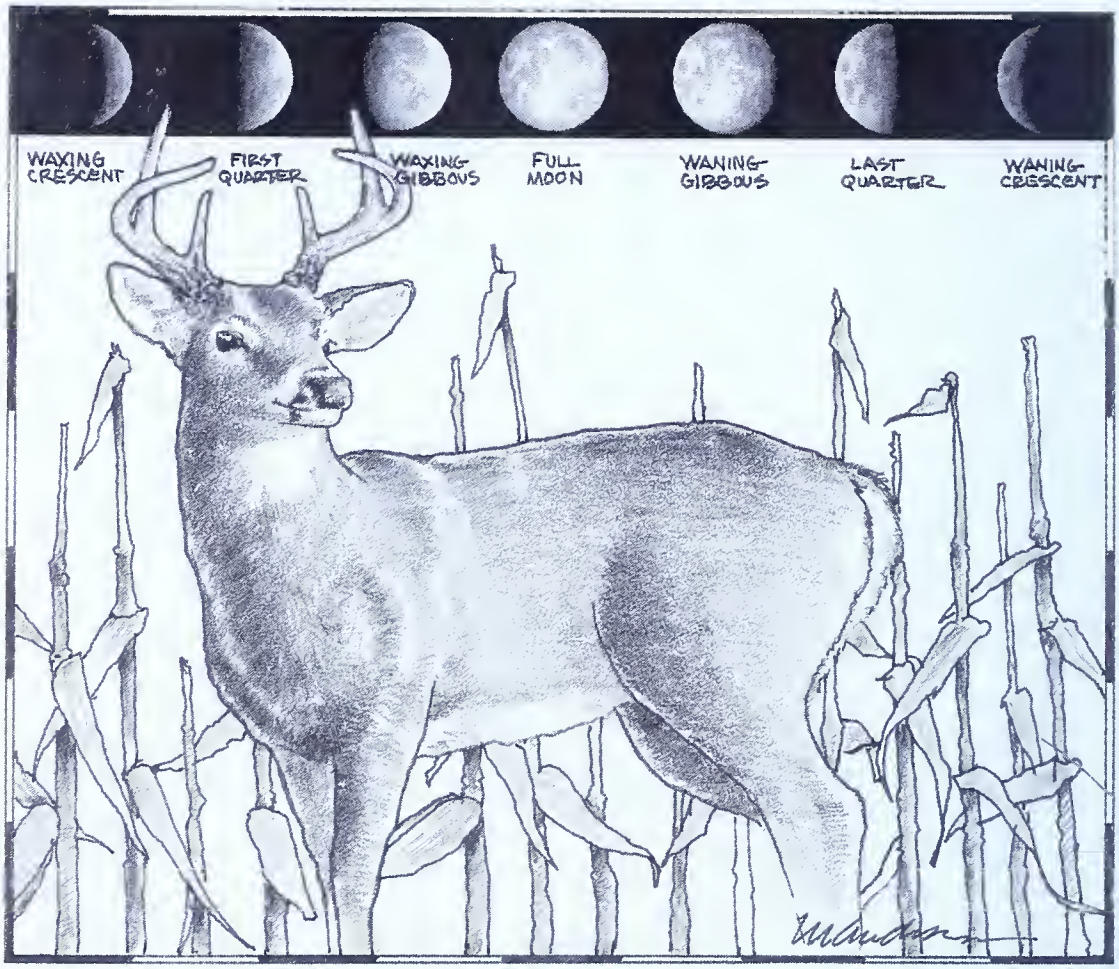
I learned another thing while helping to stock these pheasants, and that is what a treasure Pennsylvanians have in Farm-Game projects. Many states have no public access program, and hunters face costly lease payments to hunt. Farm-Game landowners unselfishly open their lands to allow hunting without a fee, and I believe do their level best to create habitat for wildlife. Both the Game Commission and these landowners are to be commended. Stop to thank them when you see a sign. The friendships forged are lasting, and there can be no price tag set on how much benefit we receive from these kind and generous folks. Such generosity is extraordinary in this computer age.

But it wasn't Farm-Game acreage we hunted the last day of pheasant season. It was a farm with a good deal of set-aside farmland. The farmer, an older gentleman, answered the door slowly and listened thoughtfully to my request to hunt. He looked out over his land as if thinking about something then answered me. "Sure, go ahead, hunt anywhere, even the corn," he said. "It's not like it used to be. I expect there's mostly rabbits. Make sure you leave a few."

He obviously didn't know how we shoot. There were a lot of rabbits, and we bagged a few but missed a lot more. Then we reached the withered old cornfield. It ended against an old country road, and when my friends and I reached the end, birds boiled out. Hens flew in all directions. There were so many that one flew into a telephone wire, righted itself, and then helicoptered away. There were roosters, too, and Lee, Mike Feeser and I each bagged one. The survivors pitched in a foxtail field. We stared and looked at the large field. And then we all shucked out our shells. We would leave some.

It was a short walk to the truck. As I walked back to thank the farmer, I could see him looking from his window. He had watched the whole thing. He didn't say anything about the pheasants, though, and I offered him one, and yet, as I walked back to the truck, I had the feeling that he knew they were there all along. And, in true Pennsylvania spirit, had shared them with us just because we cared enough to ask.

As I climbed in the truck, I heard a cockbird cackle from the foxtail. And I know, with the efforts of the likes of Scott Klinger and Carl Reigner, that my son and others will get to hear a Pennsylvania rooster crow. □



Solunar Buck

By Charles L. Kane

I'VE ALWAYS been a believer in John Alden Knight's Solunar Tables. When they're on, they're on, and when they're not, it's because the barometer has changed, up or down. Wait until you hear this one.

It was the second week of archery season, and I hadn't even come to a full draw let alone taken a shot. On this Thursday morning I was on my way to Dave and Laurie Patt's farm near Rose Valley Lake. The Solunar Tables predicted a major feed around 8:05 a.m., and as I passed a small cemetery, I glanced to my left, and there in a large cornfield stood a buck. I glanced at my watch, and honestly, it was 8:10. I quickly drove to the farm, gathered my recurve and cedar shafts and headed to the house. "Dave?" I called.

"Yeah," he answered.

"Grab your bow, I just saw a nice buck in the corn at the upper end of Smith's field. Pick out a spot at your end of the field, while I try to get close to him for a shot or send him toward you."

With my bow strung and camo on, I hoofed it up the hill toward Easton's Woods. The high bank along the road shielded me from the buck, but I couldn't

see him either. Long seconds passed as I tried to make it to the field before another vehicle went by and spooked the buck. Before I got there, though, a neighbor in a loud van drove by. Goodbye, buck, I thought.

As I entered the cornfield, however, the 6-point stood broadside, looking right at me. Now what? I thought. The van hadn't disturbed him, and his "flag" hadn't gone up at the sight of me. I continued to walk at an easy pace toward Smith's cornpicker while trying to figure out why this buck was not concerned about me. The buck was within range of a good archer carrying a compound bow. But, I, on the other hand, have gone back to using recurves and longbows with cedar arrows. Taking a shot was out of the question for me, but then I remembered that Dave was waiting at the end of the field. The only problem was that the field was 350 yards long, with a busy road running north and south along the border only 40 yards away. Now, you're thinking this plan has no chance at all, right? Me, too, but it was worth a try.

I moved towards the deer and got pretty close until it finally moved. He sniffed the air and his tail came up, but then it dropped back down as he turned toward the other end of the field and began slowly moving that way. I watched in disbelief as he dropped into a dip in the field and disappeared from sight. If he stayed on course, Dave was waiting with an Easton XX75



shaft tipped with a 100-grain Rocket Hammerhead propelled by a PSE Dominator bow.

I hurried across the road and circled around in back of Dave's house so as not to spook the buck if he was still moving on course. When I reached Dave's driveway, which offered a clear view of the field, I noticed Dave looking down at something on the ground. I hurried across the road, up the bank and into the field. As I got closer, I could see Dave looking down at the 6-point with a reverence I had never witnessed before. One shot through the spine and the buck was down. I shook his hand as we both said that no one would believe this one. No one but John Alden Knight. □

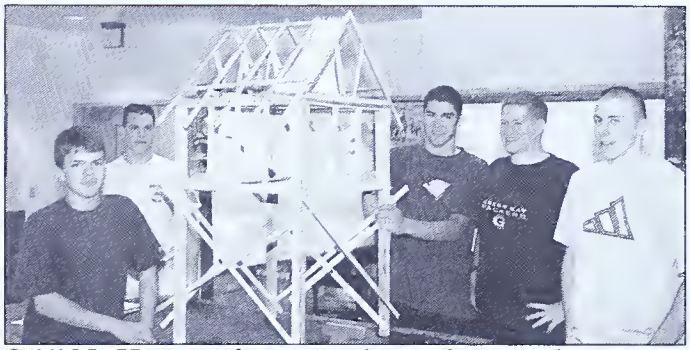
Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Longstreet Highroad Guide to the Pennsylvania Mountains, by Greg and Karen Czarnecki, published by Longstreet Press, 2140 Newmarket Parkway, Suite 122, Marietta, Georgia 30067, www.lspress.com, 306 pp., $18.95 plus $3.95 shipping. For novice and expert alike, for day trips and vacations, Highroad Guides are among the most complete mountain guides on the market. More than 55 colorful maps highlight each mountain area and complement detailed trail descriptions and information. Original etchings bring to life regional plant life, and photographs capture spectacular mountain scenes and elements of the state's history. Sidebars and illustrations also depict many wildlife species.

Pequea Valley High School Students Pitch In

By Dan Lynch
Wildlife Education Supervisor
Southeast Region



SENIOR FFA members are shown here with a scaled down version of the bat condo.

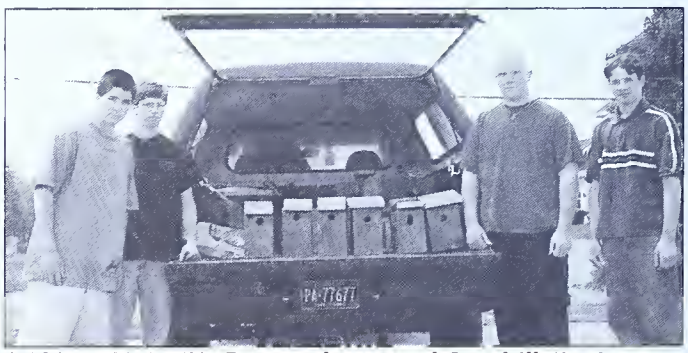
SEVERAL WILDLIFE PROJECTS were completed by Pequea Valley High School FFA Chapter students in Lancaster County during the 1998-99 school year. Led by Agriculture Education Instructor Mr. Claire Witwer, a group of senior FFA members designed and built a kit containing molds of tracks of Pennsylvania wildlife. Track molds can be used by teachers and students studying animal identification and signs. Accompanying each set of tracks is a cut-out picture of the animal that made it.

Another project completed by FFA members was the construction of nearly 100 nesting cavity boxes designed to be used by bluebirds, screech owls and wood ducks. These boxes will end up on state game lands or private lands enrolled in the Game Commission's public access programs.

One huge project that FFA members took on was the design and construction of a large bat condo. The bat condo is a large bat house designed to be used by little brown bat maternity colonies. This roost site could house more than 6,000 female bats and their young. Bats are beneficial because they keep pesky insect populations in check.

To understand the magnitude of this project, a bat condo is an 8x8-foot wide structure that is 8½ feet from bottom to peak. Its floor is elevated more than 8 foot off the ground, and it contains 80 sheets of plywood for the inside roosting baffles alone.

Because of the hard work and dedication to wildlife from Pequea Valley FFA members and their teacher, animals such as little brown bats, wood ducks and screech owls in Lancaster and Lebanon counties will have great homes for years to come.



PEQUEA VALLEY FFA members Brad Graybill, Jim Hanna, Brandon Lichty and Mike Wharton with some bluebird boxes they constructed.



PEQUEA VALLEY Agriculture Mechanics students proudly display just some of the cavity nesting boxes they constructed to benefit bluebirds.



SENIOR FFA members Mike Vandergrift, Seth Fisher, Jared Artus, Kyle Brady and Josh French display some of the plaster wildlife tracks they designed for teachers and students to study wildlife.



FFA MEMBERS Bobby Baker, Andy Campachonico, Joe Dunlap, Dave Finger, Chad Gillenwater, J.J. Prouse, Brian Rineer, C.J. Todd, Jerry Graybill and instructor Claire Witwer are shown here busy building the bat condo.



THE PROOF is in the pudding. Here's the completed bat condo installed at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

New Blood

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick

OCTOBER ARRIVED ON THE WINGS of a hawk spiraling in a cobalt sky, its red tail igniting when it arced through a slanting ray. John squinted at the soaring bird until it disappeared, then climbed into his Suburban and drove to the hardware store to buy a leaf rake and a box of grouse loads for his 20-gauge Fox. At the store he also picked up a pot of crimson mums for his wife, Alice, and a new collar for his Brittany, Star.

Leaving the village, he followed a narrows along the river and noted the blush of yellow and scarlet in the woods and his pulse quickened in anticipation of the upcoming bird season. Impulsively, he decided to drive to a favorite covert, a 15-mile detour, but worth it just to park there for a while, to smell the air and listen to the creek beckon with promises of a good season.

Along a stretch of rural road he saw "Yard Sale Ahead" signs taped to the posts of a fence, and on a whim pulled in behind a line of other vehicles. He browsed through the boxes in front of the handsome country home and located a stack of outdoor books. Most were titles in his own library. The previous owner had obviously been a bird hunter; his copy of Spiller's *Drummer in the Woods* still held a bookmark — the central tailfeather from a cock grouse. On the bottom of the stack he found a copy of H.L. Betten's *Upland Game Shooting* and took it over to a red-haired woman sitting under a sun canopy.



"Daddy loved hunting," she sighed. "This was his time of year. We kept his guns for the kids, but there's some old worn out hunting outfits hanging up in the garage and a few boxes of odds and ends."

John went into the garage and examined the clothes. The woman was right, the outfits had seen hard use. Under a Woolrich coat he found a canvas vest, a Filson Tin Cloth vest, in good shape except for a long vertical tear in the game pouch. He needed a new vest and Alice could repair this one easily.

The girl looked the vest over and said, "He had this vest forever. It needs some stitching and cleaning. How about five dollars?"

"Sold," said John.

The woman laughed. "You're a pushover. You're supposed to haggle at yard sales, that's half the fun."

"I'm satisfied," John said. "Besides, I would've paid you 10."

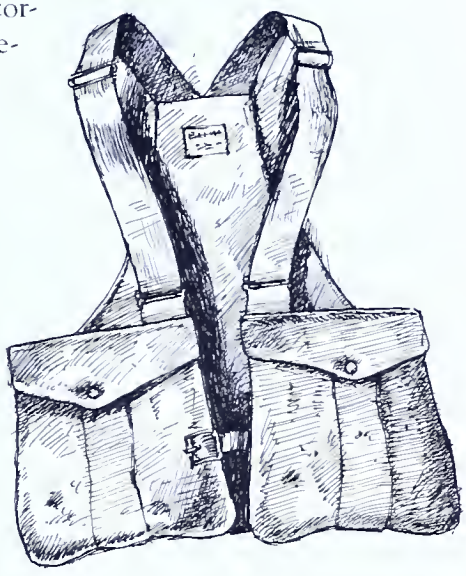
"And I would have let it go for two," she said.

That evening John spread out a newspaper on a table and laid the vest on it. He unpinned the empty license holder, then turned the game bag inside out, emptying the collected chaff of the hunt. There was milkweed silk and thornapple thorns and wisps of

rabbit hair along with various gamebird feathers. Like a shaman he picked up and dropped bits of grapevine tendrils, fragile and gray as old mouse bones, trying to read something of the former owner's days afield. The vest was splotched in places with indigo pokeberry juice and brown flecks of blood.

In the shell loops of the right pocket were three unfired Peters 20-gauge loads with faded red paper hulls, 7½ shot. The left pocket contained an old penknife, tarnished, but razor sharp, and in another shell loop he found a tightly rolled sheet of paper.

John carefully unrolled the paper, smoothed it down and used the shells and the knife to weight each corner. It was an exquisite, hand-drawn map with precise lettering and small drawings rendered by a professional hand, an architect perhaps. The map was of a large triangle of woods bordered by three dirt roads. The big triangle was subdivided into three smaller triangles. He excitedly put on his reading glasses and wandered deeper through the curious map.



The first triangle was labeled "Heistand's Farm," with tiny drawings of apple trees and stone walls and farm buildings. It showed a well near a black locust spring and in yet smaller italic type was the caution: *Watch for abandoned well here!* The second triangle was called "Sawtown," and was laced with a maze of tram roads and the great ovals of sawdust piles and lumber sheds and a broad creek. The third triangle was a deep hollow with a tiny run that the unknown cartographer had labeled "Furnace Run," with a drawing of a structure like a big kiln near the road. On the back of the map was a record, beginning in 1949, with the easily deciphered abbreviations of RG for ruffed grouse, W for woodcock, and P for pheasants. It showed the total flushes and birds taken within each smaller triangle for that year. The last entry was 1996, with the notation, "Plenty of birds — just can't do it anymore."

John located the large triangle on an actual topo map and saw that it was now public land, thank goodness, and hadn't been developed. It lay 35 miles northeast of his own coverts. He vacuumed the pockets and brushed down the vest and took it up to his wife for mending.

"What did you give for this old thing?" she teased.

"Five bucks."

"I would've offered them two, and I'll bet they would have taken it. You should have haggled a bit. That's half the fun."

"If I would have known what was inside, I'd have given a hundred."

"Well, what did you find?"

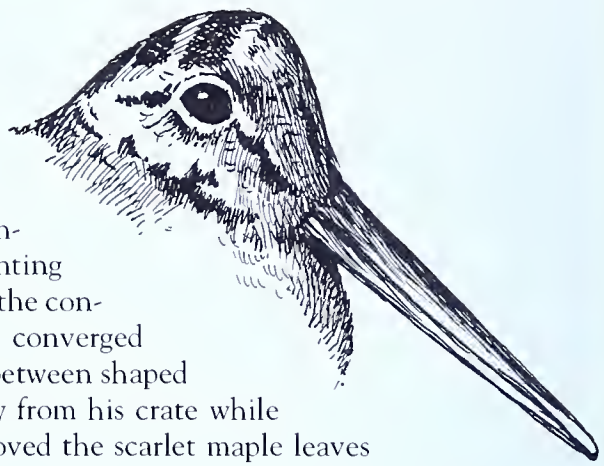
"A treasure map."

"Go walk Star, I'll have this mended by the time you get back. Wouldn't want all that gold spilling out all over the place, would we?"

His final day of work was October 27, when he would officially retire. This unnerved him a bit, as he was used to working 50 hours or more a week, but with the hunting season coming on, he knew exactly how to fill those hours. With so many loose ends to tie up, he wouldn't get out to hunt the new coverts until the last day of October. He'd

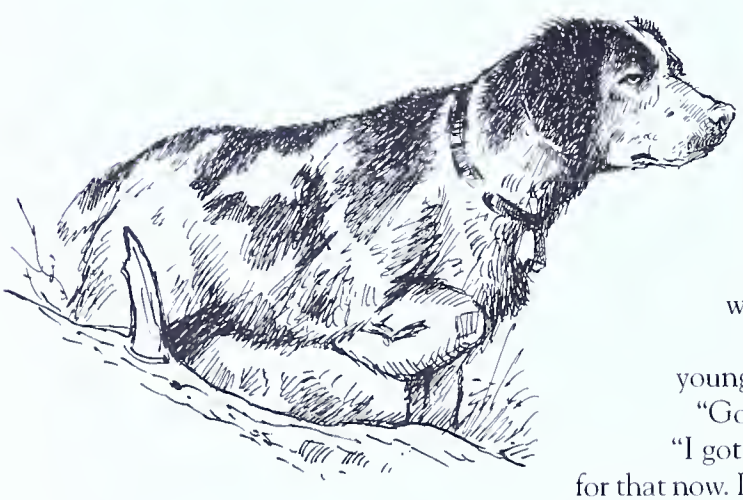
begin retirement with a Halloween bird hunt.

That morning the world loomed large and full of promise, just as it had in his youth. It had drizzled all night, but that was fine with him — he loved ghosting through the misty woods, watching Star work his stuff under ideal scenting conditions. The dog got its name from the configuration of three russet patches that converged on his side, the negative white space between shaped like a ragged star. Star whined eagerly from his crate while John lifted each wiper blade and removed the scarlet maple leaves stuck to the windshield.



They would hunt the Sawtown triangle first, the largest of the three coverts. Star ran wild circles around the weedy parking area, anxious to get started. While uncasing his gun John spotted two torn trash bags and papers and cans strewn around the perimeter, and knew that he had to bag the trash before he got to hunting. He muttered some dark words as he unfurled a big leaf bag and picked up the cans and papers. He locked the bag in the Suburban as Star watched. "Wouldn't want anyone to come by and steal that trash, would we, boy?"

John buckled the Filson vest, crooked the gun over an arm and checked the map one last time, even though he knew it now by heart. He walked the tram roads with Star ahead, working one side then another. John inhaled the heady autumn air while Star sorted through a myriad of subtler scents. The dog read the text of the earth, a complex lexicon of odors, searching eagerly for that special one. There . . . no here now, the magic elixir of grouse scent flooded his nose and flowed through his heart and was pumped into his veins and . . . in a few more steps . . . froze him onto steady point. John walked in and the grouse arced out into the tram road and the Fox leaped and he saw the bird puff and tumble. Star delivered it to his master's gloved hand, quivering in the soft words of praise. John admired the bird then, without looking, slipped it neatly into the new vest as if he had done it a hundred times before.



They hunted the thickets where the big sawdust piles were drawn on the map, but there was no sign of the piles or remnants of the mill itself. John missed a snap shot at a bird and they headed back. The creek that lazed through Sawtown widened in a spot and he saw a young man, shotgun under his arm, on the opposite bank walking briskly into the cover.

"Thick in there, isn't it?" said the young hunter. "How'd you do?"

"Got one, missed one," John said.

"I gotta get a bird dog someday. No time for that now. I'm just back from overseas and goin' to school. Well, good luck, buddy."

John and Star rested at the Suburban and ate lunch. The wind had picked up and the air grew chill. As the pines tossed he thought he heard the faint whine of boards being ripped, but it probably was only trees grating in the wind.

The road up to the Heistand Farm covert was rutted and steep. The sizeable orchard on the map now consisted of only a half-dozen apple trees, boughs broken by bears, but it was prime bird country. He found some spongy boards where a barn had stood, and a sandstone foundation covered by red creeper vines. The boggy bottomland was pocked with deer tracks and huge, pungent scrapes. Star put out a tremendous buck with a towering rack that ran right past John. He made a mental note because buck season would be here before you knew it. But that was in his working days; time would be measured differently now. Star went on point next to a patch of goldenrod, and a woodcock flushed, but John's feet were not set and he aimed the shotgun instead of pointing and swinging, then aimed again, and somehow the bird fell, even though John's clumsy form should have caused him to miss. He smiled at the lucky shot.

They took a break on a rise above the farm, and John listened to what sounded like the steady putt of a tractor, or was it a grouse drumming? They followed the lane that led out from the farm when ahead he saw a white and black setter flash across the lane and back again. A man, about his age, whistled the dog back across and held it by its collar as they passed. He waved politely and smiled, but didn't speak.

It was late in the afternoon and cold when they reached the Furnace Run covert. The wind had died and it was very quiet as errant flakes fell from leaden clouds. John slipped the last paper shell into the Fox, next to a modern load, and as he was about to close the gun, an elderly hunter walked out of the woods, an open Parker crooked over his arm. He had traces of red in his pushbroom moustache and was cutting slices from a peeled apple and eating them off the blade.

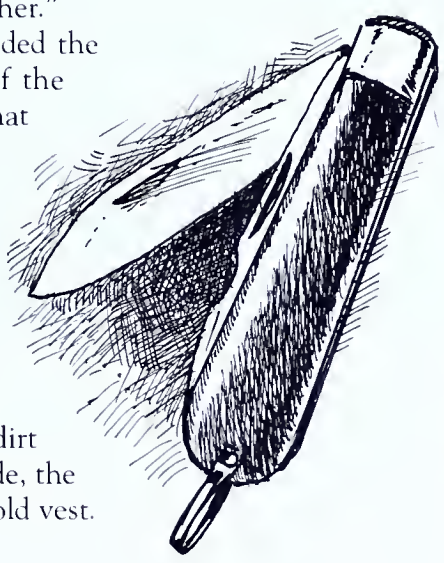
"Did you put out any birds?" asked John.

"Flushed three, got one. A lucky shot, though. Used to do better when I had my dog."

"I made a lucky shot on a woodcock today," said John.

"Woodcock? I bet you were up on Heistand's farm there, over the hill. Used to hunt that place a lot. I knew Charlie Heistand well. Hunted around the corner from there too, up around Sawtown. Started huntin' there my first year of college, after the war." The stranger patted Star on his trademark spot. "I had a couple good dogs, the last an English setter. Pretty dog. Ivy we called her."

John froze in his tracks when the old man folded the knife and pocketed it. He stood there in front of the stranger, motionless as a dog on point who senses that something wondrous, something magical, lingers just beyond.



The aged hunter removed the red shells from the Parker's chambers and slipped them into the loops of his vest. "I'm glad you showed up," he said. "It's time for new blood here. A special woods like this just isn't complete without a hunter and his dog."

John turned and watched the figure cross the dirt road and fade into the dusky woods on the other side, the tailfeathers of a grouse sticking out of a tear in his old vest.

Flintlock Team Does Well

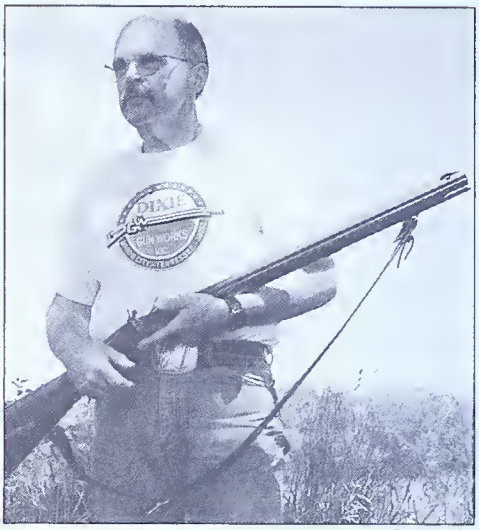
By Jim Fulmer

WHEN DIXIE GUN WORKS asked me to form a flintlock muzzleloading team to enter the third annual National Muzzleloading Rifle Association's Championship held at Friendship, Indiana, I didn't hesitate to accept the challenge.

Because of our traditional, flintlock muzzleloader deer season, Dixie wanted a team made up of Pennsylvanians shooting flintlocks with nonadjustable iron sights.

The Pennsylvania team — armed with Dixie's brand new American Jaeger flintlock rifle — consisted of myself and well-known muzzleloader shooters and hunters Frank Hoover, Don Blazier and Dave Ehrig.

Of the nine teams entered in the competition, ours was the only one not using scoped, modern in-line percussion guns. During the 3-day shoot, paper targets from 25 to 100 yards were used, then a "woodswalk" competition incorporating steel silhouette targets at various distances, and finally 6-inch diameter steel plates shot at 150 yards and 8-inch diameter plates at 175 yards.



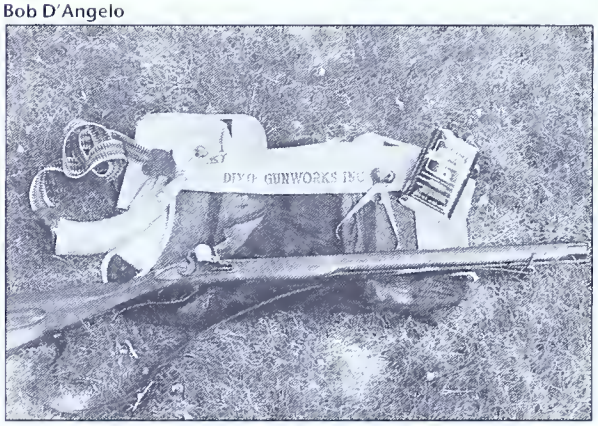
Bob D'Angelo

WHEN FRANK HOOVER is not making maps at the Game Commission headquarters, he's shooting flintlock muzzleloaders. And, boy, can he shoot.

By the end of the first day, our team was in 6th place, with Frank Hoover's individual score being the 6th highest out of 44 competitors. It wasn't until the final day of the competition, when shooting at 150- and 175-yard distances, that the iron-sighted flintlocks had trouble competing with the scope-sighted percussion guns, and we finished 8th overall — a remarkable showing, considering the long distances and the types of firearms we were competing against.

Frank Hoover also won the gold medal in the unlimited Hunters Woodswalk and the bronze in the International Free Rifle events this year at the National Muzzleloading Rifle Association Nationals. This is the second consecutive national shoot that a fixed iron-sighted flintlock has beaten scoped, modern-style muzzleloaders in the woodswalk. □

Bob D'Angelo



THE EARLY AMERICAN Jaeger rifle manufactured by Davide Pedersoli for Dixie Gun Works was put to the test at the National Muzzleloading Rifle Association's Championship.

FIELD NOTES

Think About It

If every licensed hunter in Pennsylvania took a trash bag into the woods and filled it, just think about the impact on the environment. Look at it this way: You could go hunting, fill your "bag limit" and not have to clean your gun.

— LMO George J. Miller, Pittsburgh

That'll Teach 'Em

Bedford — When I went to pick up a roadkilled deer, I found three large dogs standing over it, snarling and showing me their pearly whites. The dogs were determined to keep the deer and I was determined to remove it. When the dogs began biting at my front bumper I turned my siren on, and the next thing I saw all three dogs were heading over the ridge with their tails between their legs.

— WCO Jim Trombetto, New Enterprise

Different Outcome

Adams — At a Civil War re-enactment near Gettysburg last summer a bear ventured near the camping area. Once the animal witnessed the chaos and ruckus from the battle, however, he retreated — north, I might add.

— WCO Larry Haynes, Gettysburg

Resourceful

One of our older mowers we use for habitat work is an older John Deere 7-foot tow-behind. A piece of steel on the drive line carrier broke recently, and while trying to get a replacement part at the dealer, I was asked how old the machine was. I said at least ten years, but that I wasn't sure. The John Deere representative informed me that it was so old that the records showed that they stopped making the replacement part in 1968.

— LMO Clifford E. Guindon, Boswell

He Who Laughs First . . .

Elk — During the summer I deal with many nuisance bears, so I keep everything necessary to deal with these critters in my truck. One such item is a 5-gallon drum of molasses I use to bait my traps. On a trip to the region office to pick up supplies, Deputy Dave Stubber and I backed my vehicle up to the loading dock when we noticed a brown liquid dripping out of the back of the truck; it seems the drum had exploded in the heat. Dave was laughing until I reminded him that I was going on vacation for two weeks and he was now responsible for my district and my truck.

— WCO Doty McDowell, Saint Marys



Homing Pigeons?

Bradford — Last summer I helped capture and transfer some nuisance Canada geese at Mt. Pisgah State Park. After the geese were crated and loaded onto trucks for the ride to their new home, park foreman Don Fitzwater asked crew member Mike Harkness if he wanted to go along to the release site. Mike answered, "No, I think I'll stay to see who makes it back here first, you or the geese."

— WCO William A. Bower, Troy



Blame the Bruin

FOREST — My 3-year-old daughter, Gabrielle, used to blame her older brothers for things she did but, inspired by a bear that had made several trips to our back porch and left quite a few deep scratch marks on the porch railing, she now blames the bear for things that turn up broken simply saying, "the bear did it."

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Benefits Nongame, Too

This past spring the blossoms of some berry-producing shrubs on SGL 13 attracted a large number of tiger swallowtail butterflies. As I took in the beauty of it all, I realized just how valuable our planting efforts are. Planting trees, shrubs and vines is a wildlife management tool that all of us can use — even in our own backyards.

— LMO EUGENE R. WEINER, JR., CAMBRA

Dangerous

CLINTON — A young woman found a baby skunk along the roadway and brought it home to care for it. When I went to pick it up I noticed an open wound on the woman's hand, which made it necessary to dispatch the skunk so it could be tested for rabies. Fortunately, the animal tested negative, but this incident just goes to show that even the best intentions never excuse taking a baby animal from its environment.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Gobblin' Up the Opportunities

VENANGO — Deputy Rob Cochran and I checked a successful nonresident hunter in the Beaver Meadows area of Forest County who was carrying a 20-pound bird with an 8-inch beard. The man told us he has been hunting in Pennsylvania for more than 30 years, and that his nonresident license was the best bargain around. He said, "I buy all the licenses you guys sell and it comes to about $160. I only wish I could get a job in this area to move up here."

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, FRANKLIN

Satisfying

During my recent tour of state game lands, I went to view the progress of a deer-exclosure project in Warren County. We arrived just after WCOs Chip Brunst and Dustin Stoner, who were releasing a black bear they had trapped near a school. WCO Brunst told me that, as a young man, he used to hunt with his family on this particular portion of SGL 29. He said that now as a WCO, it seemed just as rewarding for him to be able to return a bear to this area as it was to hunt here. This impressed me as an excellent example of how rewarding a WCO's job can be and, as Executive Director of the agency, made me proud of the job our men and women do each day.

— VERN ROSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HARRISBURG

What it's All About

PHILADELPHIA — About 75 children from Philadelphia attended the Youth Field Day at the Holmesburg Fish & Game Protective Association. There were demonstrations from the Game Commission, Fish & Boat Commission, Trapper's Association, Trevose Rifle and Pistol Club, Main Line Fly Tiers and US Fish and Wildlife Service. I would like to thank all sportsmen involved in Youth Field Days for their efforts to introduce our outdoors heritage to future generations.

— WCO JERROLD W. CZECH, JR., PHILADELPHIA

Quality & Quantity

McKEAN — If the trapping of nuisance bears here is any indication, this should be a banner year for hunters. The numbers of bears and their weights are incredible. Several bears in the 300-pound class and one brute at 560 pounds were trapped and released. Keep in mind these bears were weighed soon after they emerged from hibernation; bears in the fall will be a lot heavier.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

What Next?

POTTER — Two sandhill cranes recently took up residence on a farm a half-mile down the road from my home. Sandhill cranes are occasionally seen in Pennsylvania, but never in this county.

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT

Healthy Wildlife

CLARION — Nuisance bear calls were way down in my district last spring, due to the availability of many wild foods. In May I saw places where there were still plenty of good, edible acorns remaining from last fall. Some of these had begun to sprout, but they were still meaty and were being used by wildlife.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Saved the Day

TIOGA — My Godson, Shane Lee, and I were riding bikes on a trail in the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon when we spotted a group of people gathered around something on the trail. When we got closer we noticed two bobcat kittens that had fallen out of a rock crevice den 35 feet above the trail. With the help of two forest rangers who stopped, we caught both kittens in a net, climbed above the den and lowered the kittens in. All this time the mother was just above us intently watching the whole operation.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Mad Mallards

WCO Harold Malehorn dropped me off at my house, and while looking for my keys I heard some ducks quacking. I looked up to see two flying directly at me, and I had to duck to avoid a duck (pardon the pun). It was interesting to see them up that close, but I have to wonder if they saw my uniform.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, SE REGION OFFICE, READING



Gung Ho

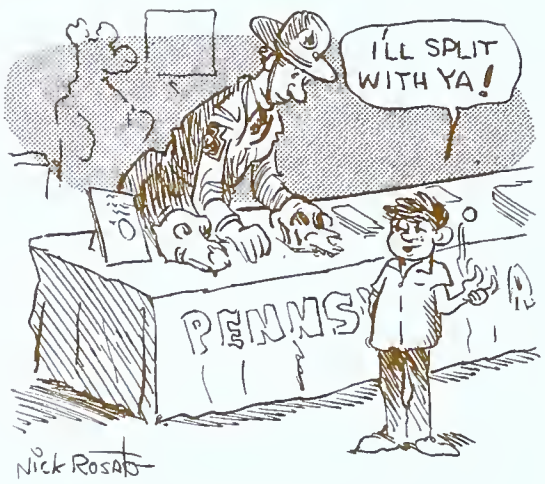
LYCOMING — My new neighboring officer WCO John Wyant has exhibited all the signs of a "hard charger," handling nuisance calls and picking up roadkills in record time and, I must admit, it's quite contagious. Please remember, however, John, to put the truck in park before jumping out to pick up those roadkills.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, WILLIAMSPORT

Have to Wonder

SCHUYLKILL — To protect newly planted trees from deer browsing we enclose them in plastic tubes. The only problem is that bears can't resist the tubes, and we find them bent in half or chewed and knocked down, allowing deer easy access to the trees. The problem is so bad that LMO Scott Bills jokingly told me that he's afraid that poachers will be using plastic tubes instead of donuts to lure bears.

— WCO STEPHEN S. HOWER, PINE GROVE



Wheelin' & Dealin'

UNION — I had some animal skulls on display at a fair when I noticed a boy of about five or six intent on removing the teeth from them, and when I asked why, he said he wanted to put them under his pillow for the tooth fairy. I told him I needed them for my display, but he said if I handed them over, he would give me half the money.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Appreciate It

I noticed an individual picking up trash around our Pymatuning visitors center parking lot, and after I thanked him, he introduced himself as Bill Bishoff and explained that he walks for exercise several times a week, and that he especially likes to make a lap through the visitors center area, to see eagles and other wildlife. Ever think of taking your lawnmower along for a walk, Bill?

— TERRY MCCLELLAND, PYMATUNING VISITOR CENTER ADMINISTRATOR

He'll Be Missed

MERCER — The Game Commission lost one of our officers on July 31, when Deputy Michael J. Leonetti died in an industrial accident. Mike was a devoted husband, father and son who is survived by his wife, Jenny, a son, Shawn, and his father, Fred, a longtime Fish & Boat Commission deputy.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Not Even Close

CRAWFORD — At the Erie County Youth Field Day I had the kids try to identify red fox, skunk, beaver, deer and coyote furs. While most of the kids did well, I had some interesting answers including goat, polar bear, chipmunk and pig.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Bears of a Different Color

A man called and said he had five bears in his yard and his wife was scared to death. I asked him if he had garbage or bird feeders, and he said he had 20 bird feeders and that was what the bears were feeding on. He explained that he had just moved from Chicago and his wife was ready to move back because of the bears. I commented that there weren't any bears out there, but the man laughed and replied, "There's the Chicago Bears."

— DISPATCHER RICHARD LICHTENFELS, LIGONIER



Mystery

ELK — Golfer Wayne Bryndel has a big lawn surrounded by woods, but that doesn't stop him from practicing his golf game. Although he loses a lot of balls in the woods, some unidentified animal collects them and places them at the edge of the woodlot. If Wayne could capture his "helper," he'd be a big hit at the country club.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Not to be Foiled

Ospreys at Shohola SGL 180 returned last spring to find that ice had knocked down their telephone pole nest. Being adaptable, they built a new nest on the roof of the nearby eagle hack tower and raised their young.

— LMO John C. Shutkufski, Damascus



Not Even Valentine's Day

Warren — Dispatcher Bill Elliot asked me to respond to a nuisance bear call in Brookville, and while on my way I received another message from dispatcher Ken Clark that there were two bears, a male and female. I was surprised to get extremely close to the male and hit him with a tranquilizer dart. Thinking back, I wonder if the bear was expecting cupid's arrow instead of the dart.

— WCO Dustin M. Stoner, Tidioute

Can't See Forest Through the Trees

Wyoming — Deputy Jeff Pierce was called to a residence to handle some nuisance beavers. While standing along the dam, Jeff saw beaver, muskrat, mink and fox tracks. Bass and bluegills were swimming nearby, and a great blue heron waited patiently for its meal along the bank. The man told Jeff he planned to take a bulldozer into the marsh and clear everything out so he could create some wildlife habitat.

— WCO William Wasserman, Tunkhannock

Electrifying

Young ospreys needed banded at Shenango Lake in Mercer County, but one of the nests was located atop a 150-foot metal pole tower that carried a 68,000 volt electric line. Penn Power Company linemen climbed the tower and lowered three young birds down to be banded and examined. All birds were found to be in good health and were returned to their nests.

— LMO James E. Deniker, Sandy Lake

Second Time Around

Wayne — I received a call about a nuisance bear that was continuously raiding the contents of a large trash container at a local camp, and after setting my trap, I contacted WCO Don Burchell and asked if he would check it in my absence. When Don arrived he noticed the bait was gone, so he immediately placed several cookies in the trap. Before he could walk the short distance to his truck, however, he heard something behind him and turned to see a large bear scurry down to the trap and get caught. Don, I know you have earned the bragging rights for being the fastest trapper in the region, and I hate to burst your bubble, but the relocated bear is back.

— WCO Frank J. Dooley, Tyler Hill

Wide As it is Tall

Allegheny — In July I contacted Don Hopey, a staff writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, who was writing an article on national and state champion trees. It seems a Virginia pine tree on SGL 203 near Wexford was recorded as a state champion tree several years ago. I met with Don at the game lands and, with directions from the region's foresters, we set out to locate the big pine. Nearly three hours later, in the unbearable humidity, we located the tree. It still would have been the largest Virginia pine in the state, if most of it hadn't snapped off. We measured it at 85 inches in circumference and 93 inches tall.

— WCO Gary M. Fujak, Pittsburgh

Orphaned bear cubs released

NINE ORPHANED bear cubs were released back into the wild this past summer after being cared for in the agency's new reintroduction facility in the Northcentral Region. "Every year, wildlife conservation officers across the commonwealth pick up cubs that were orphaned for one reason or another," said Northcentral Region Director Barry Hambley. "In some cases, these young cubs are left to fend for themselves because the mother was chased from her den site and didn't return or was killed by a vehicle.

"In the past, the Game Commission donated these cubs to zoos or sold them to qualified permittees. Then, in 1992, the agency began working with Sylvia and Al Slater on a joint effort to reintroduce the cubs back into the wild."

The Slaters, licensed rehabilitators who live in Slate Run, Lycoming County, worked with region personnel and local WCOs to construct — at their own expense — a bear reintroduction facility on their property. The goal was to take healthy, orphaned cubs that were too young to survive on their own and raise them until they were old enough to fend for themselves.

The 40-by-40 foot facility was constructed out of wood and had 8-foot walls. The manmade den included a feeding station, water pool, hollow logs, climbing logs and other natural items for the bears to use. To reduce the chance of the bears becoming habituated to humans, all feeding was done from the outside without any interaction between the cubs and people. The bears could be observed through a one-way glass window on an observation tower.

In 1999 the Slaters retired and donated the facility to the Game Commission. The pen was dismantled and rebuilt on Game Commission property.

"When the cubs first arrive at the facility, they are fed a special liquid formula for several weeks and are then introduced to solid foods such as fruits, vegetables and acorns," Hambley said. "Additionally, stones placed within the pen help the cubs learn to flip stones in search of food, and decaying logs inside also become a source of food as the bears begin to claw and bite off the bark in search of insects."

Cubs are typically received in the spring and released in early summer, when wild berries are available. All the cubs are ear-tagged so that their history can be retrieved if they are recaptured or killed. From 1992 to 1999, 28 bear cubs were raised and reintroduced back to the wild. Of those, 8 were harvested during bear seasons and one was recaptured a year after its release.

This year, starting in late March, the agency received nine orphaned cubs, some weighing as little as 5.5 pounds, from WCOs in Somerset

County (2 cubs); Clearfield (1 cub); Tioga (1 cub); Lycoming (1 cub); Luzerne (3 cubs); and Crawford (1 cub).

All of the cubs survived and ranged from 32 to 52 pounds when released in mid-July.

Three cubs each were released in the Tiadaghton State Forest, Lycoming County; State Game Lands 89, Clinton County; and the Tioga State Forest, Tioga County.

"It appears that these cubs have done well and all those involved with this program should feel a sense of accomplishment in carrying out this effort," Hambley said. "We want Pennsylvanians to know that every orphaned cub bear does not qualify for this program, and we most definitely want people to understand that they should leave wildlife in the wild. Natural mothers can raise their young much better than we can."

Hardisky honored by Pennsylvania Trappers Association

TOM HARDISKY, Game Commission wildlife biologist and Furbearer and Farmland Wildlife Section supervisor, recently was presented with the Pennsylvania Trappers Association's first-ever "Conservationist of the Year Award." Presented at the association's state rendezvous, this award is given to "a person who has gone above and beyond the call" for Pennsylvania trappers and the state's furbearing resource.

"Tom Hardisky has been very candid and accessible to the Pennsylvania Trappers Association, and we appreciate the work he continues to do to promote the commonwealth's trapping heritage," said Richard Bohn, Pennsylvania Trappers Association president. "Trappers and hunters were the nation's first wildlife conservationists. Therefore, for his past efforts, we believe Tom Hardisky is deserving of this recognition."

"I enjoy working with the Pennsylvania Trappers Association to improve furbearer seasons, bag limits and taking methods," Hardisky said. "Communications between our agency and their organization have increased over the past few years as we work together to promote responsible use of furbearers and improve the public image of trapping."

Hardisky earned bachelor's degrees in biology and wildlife science from Penn State University and a master's degree from Mississippi State University in wildlife ecology.

From 1986-88, Hardisky served as a black bear biologist with the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. In 1989, he worked as a beaver damage specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Tennessee. In 1989, Hardisky joined the Game Commission.

Currently, he oversees research and monitoring of all furbearer and farmland wildlife species. Hardisky is active in the Game Commission's beaver harvest management; coyote and red fox trap testing; and fisher and river otter reintroduction; as well as the administration of the Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP). A native of Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, Hardisky currently lives in Loganton, Clinton County.

New digest format saves money

BY USING advertising revenues, the Game Commission saved nearly $80,000 in printing and distribution costs for the 1.5 million copies of the 2000-2001 *Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*, according to Bureau of Information and Education Director Carl Graybill.

"This is a tremendous savings when you consider last year's digest cost the Game Commission $138,000 to print and distribute," said Graybill. "This is also an excellent response to our first bid to include paid advertising in this publication. Next year, we anticipate the cost savings to be considerably higher."

This year's digest cover features a photograph of Michelle Reider and her father, Tim. Michelle, of Newport, Perry County, was the junior division grand-prize winner of the Game Commission's 1999 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest.

Information on the 2000 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest is included on page 29 of the digest, and on the agency's webpage, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

In addition to hunting seasons and bag limits, this year's digest includes a 2-page illustrated layout of fluorescent orange requirements for the various seasons.

The digest also includes Game Commission region office information and toll-free numbers; information on Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections; an advisory on West Nile Encephalitis; 1999-2000 harvest maps for deer and bear; various management area maps; applications for "private-lands only" antlerless deer tags; bobcat permit application and information; details and applications for the Hunter-Trapper/Landowner LINK program; and a *Pennsylvania Game News* subscription form.

Larnerd named Northeast law enforcement supervisor

RICHARD P. LARNERD, Bradford County WCO, has been promoted to Law Enforcement Supervisor for the Game Commission's Northeast Region. He replaces Barry Hambley who was appointed Northcentral Region Director in June.

As Law Enforcement Supervisor in the 13-county area of the Northeast Region, Larnerd oversees the law enforcement activities of 24 wildlife conservation officers and their deputies, as well as four land management officers.

Larnerd began his career with the Game Commission in 1987 as a deputy wildlife conservation officer in Susquehanna County. In 1988, he was accepted into the 20th class of trainees at the agency's Ross Leffler School of Conservation. Upon graduating, he was assigned to the Special Investigation Unit, Harrisburg, where he worked as a Special Investigator for 12 months. Rick was transferred to Bradford County in 1990, where he served as wildlife conservation officer in the county's northern district.

Throughout his career Rick has served as a field training officer and

firearms instructor, and as resident instructor for the 25th class at the training school.

Larnerd was selected for the Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association Award (CLECA) in 1994 and nominated to represent the Northeast Region for the Shikar-Safari Award in 1997. He also received numerous commendations for his law enforcement and information and educational efforts within his assigned area. In 1997, Rick penned the popular "Looking Back" column for *Game News*, and he has also made several contributions to the "Behind the Badge" feature.



A native of Birchardville, Susquehanna County, Rick graduated from Montrose Area High School in 1981. He served as an infantryman with the U.S. Army from 1982 through 1986. Rick and his wife, JoAnne, currently live in Warren Center, Bradford County. They have three children: Kyle, Zachary and Miranda.



JIM ROTTMUND, right, recently retired firearms examiner for the Pennsylvania State Police, was given a Pennsylvania duck stamp print and certificate of appreciation for his years of exemplary assistance to the Game Commission. According to Cumberland County WCO Tim Grenoble, shown here presenting the awards, Rottmund has always respected and taken a special interest in conservation officers and their work. He was always willing to examine evidence, visit crime scenes, and provide training on a personal level and at the training school.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

OH2 Photo Contest

IN CONJUNCTION with Outdoor Heritage 2000 held in Huntingdon this past May, the Game Commission and *Westsylvania* magazine are sponsoring a photo contest. Contest categories are: "Watchable Wildlife," the animals must be alive and in their natural habitat; "Pennsylvania Outdoor Heritage," subjects must be historic and outside; "People Enjoying the Outdoors," they can be in a park, on the water, even in a tree, just so they're doing something naturally; and "Magic of the Mountains," an open category to recognize photographic talent and artistic flair.

Winners in each category will receive prizes valued at more than $300, with a grand prize package valued at more than $2,000.

Photographs must be slides, transparencies or 8x10 prints. Also, the photographs must have been taken in Adams, Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cumberland, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder, Somerset, Washington or Westmoreland counties.

For more information write Outdoor Heritage 2000 Photo Contest, P.O. Box 565, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648, or call 814-696-9380. Entries must be postmarked before December 1, 2000.

Staback honored

STATE Representative Edward G. Staback (D-Lackawanna) was recently honored for his efforts to enhance small game habitat through the enactment of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

"With Representative Staback's consistent support, Pennsylvania farmers and rural landowners will be able to participate in CREP, which is the greatest hope for restoring 100,000 acres of small game habitat in Pennsylvania," said PGC Executive Director Vern Ross. "The program not only will benefit small game hunting, but also will go a long way toward improving water quality and reducing soil erosion in the Potomac and Susquehanna river basins."

CREP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In Pennsylvania, CREP is focused on enrolling 100,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and buffers in a 20-county region within the Chesapeake Bay watershed for 10 to 15 years. Landowners will be offered annual rental payments and possibly up to 100



REPRESENTATIVE Ed Staback, second from right, was presented with a Marie Girio-Brummett print featuring two beagles, in appreciation for his work promoting the CREP program. PGC Bureau of Land Management Director Greg Grabowicz, Executive Director Vern Ross, and Legislative Liaison Bill Shultz, right, made the presentation.

percent cost-share for installing conservation practices.

"It's been my intent all along to see this program expanded so we can partner with the federal government on other vital issues, such as acid mine drainage and farmland preservation," said Rep. Staback, Democratic vice-chairman of the House Game and Fisheries Committee. "I have no doubt that our agricultural community will rise to the challenge."

USDA began taking offers for enrollment in CREP on June 1. Enrollment for the program will remain open until the 100,000-acre cap is reached. CREP does not target Pennsylvania's best farmland. Rather it focuses on those lands in most need of conservation. So far, 620 landowners have offered 21,522 acres, including 7,394 acres that also are part of the Game Commission's Farm-Game program.

CREP was one of the first conservation programs announced by Gov. Tom Ridge under his Growing Greener initiative, which is administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection. Landowners interested in participating in CREP can contact their county USDA Farm Service Agency for more information.

Upcoming PGC events

ON OCTOBER 13, 14 & 15, in conjunction with Fort Ligonier Days, the Southwest Region will be hosting informational displays by Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the National Rifle Association, the Unified Sportsmen and other conservation related organizations. Hours will be from noon to 6 p.m. on Friday, 13; 9a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, the 14; and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, the 15th. Attracting nearly 100,000 people, Fort Ligonier Days will also feature food and craft concessions, a parade on Saturday and tours of old Ft. Ligonier throughout the event. At the Game Commission region office, visitors will get to build their own bluebird boxes, officers will be on hand to answer questions, and (subject to availability) demonstrations on how we process black bears will be given.

Southcentral: October 1, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., SGL 290 (Haldeman Island) walking tour; October 8 Lake Raystown area, Huntingon County, 1p.m., walking tour of wetlands with hay wagon shuttle from the Aitch boat launch parking lot; October 15, SGL 26, Bedford County, noon to 4 p.m., driving tour starting at twin gates along Rt. 869 west of Pavia.

Southeast: October 15, SGLs 110, Berks County, and 211, Dauphin and Lebanon counties, vehicle tours will be offered from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Northcentral: October 8, SGL 75, Lycoming County, 1 p.m., at the upper parking lot of the Fisher Mine Rd.; October 15, SGL 252, Union County, noon to 4 p.m., at maintenance buildings on Alvira Rd.

Northeast: October 15, SGL 57 (Luzerne and Wyoming counties), registration to be held at the Cider Run Parking area, Noxen, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. This is a 30-mile self-guided tour and 4WD vehicles are recommended.October 1, SGLs 12 and 36, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., the route will start on top of Wheelerville Mountain and the tour begin at 11am.

2000-2001 waterfowl seasons and bag limits

THE 2000-2001 waterfowl seasons and bag limits selected by the Pennsylvania Game Commission were forwarded to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on Friday, Aug. 18, and final approval from the USFWS is expected by late September. Watch local news media or check the agency's website for any possible changes.

John Dunn, PGC waterfowl biologist, said hunters throughout eastern Pennsylvania will again have a 15-day season for Atlantic Population Canada geese. This will be the second consecutive year for this season on migratory Canada geese. The season will be Nov. 18-25 and Dec. 22-30, with a one-goose daily limit.

"The Game Commission was hoping for a liberalization of Canada geese seasons and bag limits this year, but poor nesting conditions in northern Quebec precluded expanding the season," said Dunn. "A very conservative hunting season is again warranted to ensure any harvest does not jeopardize the ongoing recovery of this population."

Again this year, waterfowl hunters in northwestern Pennsylvania will find later goose hunting seasons in Butler, Crawford and Mercer counties. In addition, the waterfowl season package once again includes expanded hunting opportunities for resident Canada geese in early and late seasons.

To address the problems associated with large numbers of resident Canada geese, the Game Commission is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, within the framework of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, to allow for expanded management options. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, establishes acceptable harvest rates to ensure the long-term success of all migratory birds, including Canada geese.

"While resident Canada geese do not migrate, for the purposes of establishing hunting seasons, they still fall under the jurisdiction of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act," Dunn said.

A draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on expanded management options for resident Canada geese is being developed by the USFWS. The proposed draft is expected this fall, with final approval in 2001.

The 2000-2001 duck seasons include 60 hunting days and a daily limit of six birds, the same as last year.

"Breeding populations of most ducks are above long-term averages, and habitat conditions in eastern North America were good for duck nesting and production," Dunn said. "Overall, conditions are much improved over the drought of 1999, and duck production is expected to be good this year."

Although mallard and wood duck breeding pairs decreased from 1999, they still are near long-term averages and can support a 60-day duck season.

Dunn did caution, however, that predictions of record fall flights does not necessarily translate into improved hunting success. Weather patterns and food availability on migration and wintering areas can have a tremendous impact upon where the birds are at any given time in the flyway.

The daily bag limit of ducks has remained at six, and the daily limit on scaup has remained at three. However, this year the season for black ducks is

the same as for other ducks, although the daily bag limit remains at one, due to their improved population status.

In addition to a regular Pennsylvania hunting license, persons 16 and older must have a federal Waterfowl and Migratory Bird Stamp, commonly referred to as a "Duck Stamp," signed in ink across its face. All waterfowl hunters, regardless of age, must have a Pennsylvania Migratory Game Bird License to hunt waterfowl and other migratory birds, including doves, woodcocks, coots, moorhens, rails and snipe.

All migratory game bird hunters in the United States are required to complete a Harvest Information Program survey when they purchase a state migratory game bird license. The survey information is then forwarded to the USFWS.

"By answering the questions on the survey card, hunters will improve survey efficiency and the quality of information used to track the harvest of migratory birds for management purposes," Dunn said.

ELECTRONIC DECOYS PROHIBITED

Under current Game Commission regulations, the use of any electronic contrivance or device that does not have specific approval by the Board of Game Commissioners is prohibited. Such approval has not been given for any sort of electrically powered decoy currently on the market.

Caution over eating mergansers

TO MINIMIZE potential health impacts, Game Commission waterfowl biologist John Dunn suggests that hunters should not eat mergansers taken in the Lake Erie and northwestern Pennsylvania hunting zones.

Based on studies conducted in the past two decades by Pennsylvania and New York, mergansers, especially common and red-breasted, in the Lake Erie region have been found with varying levels of contaminants, including PCBs.

"Mergansers consume fish and other aquatic organisms that may cause a concentration of contaminants in body tissue," Dunn said. "Health officials have issued similar consumption advisories for certain species of fish found in these same waters."

For this reason, the Game Commission is cautioning hunters from consuming any mergansers. Other waterfowl should be skinned and the fat removed before cooking. Stuffing should be discarded after cooking and should not be consumed. Hunters should not eat more than two meals of waterfowl per month.

"Since mergansers from the Lake Erie area are likely to migrate to other areas of Pennsylvania, the Game Commission felt it was important to make all hunters aware of these basic health guidelines," Dunn said.

Last year, Pennsylvania's nearly 40,000 waterfowl hunters harvested 5,000 mergansers statewide.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

2000-2001 Waterfowl Seasons

Regular Canada Goose Hunting Season



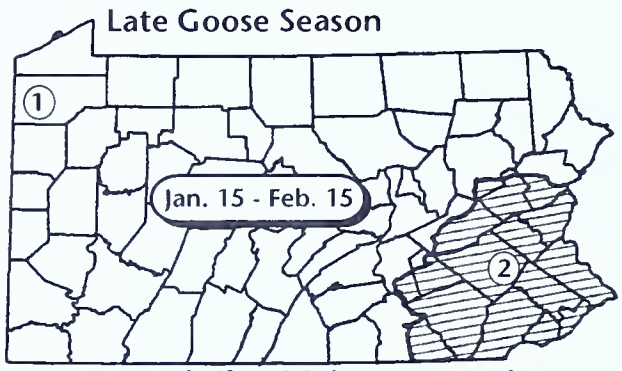
All of Pennsylvania will have a regular Canada goose season. However, season lengths and bag limits will vary by area as follows:

In that portion of Pennsylvania east of Interstate-83 from the Maryland line to intersection of US Rt. 30, to intersection of SR 441 to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of US Rt. 322, east of US Rt. 322 to intersection of SR 147, east of SR 147 to intersection of I-180, east of I-180 to intersection of US Rt. 220, east of US Rt. 220 to the New York line, the season: Nov. 18 - 25 & Dec. 22 - 30 with a 1 goose daily limit, 2 in possession.

In the remainder of the state (note exception) the regular goose season will be Nov. 15 - Dec. 30, with a limit of 2 geese per day, 4 in possession.

In that area in Crawford County south of SR 198 from the Ohio line to intersection of SR 18, to intersection of US Rt. 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer County line, the season is Nov. 15 - Dec. 25 with a limit of 1 goose per day, 2 in possession.

Late Canada Goose Hunting (Statewide)



Exceptions: (1) Closed in Crawford County in the area south of SR 198 from the Ohio line to intersection of SR 18 to intersection of US Rt. 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer line.

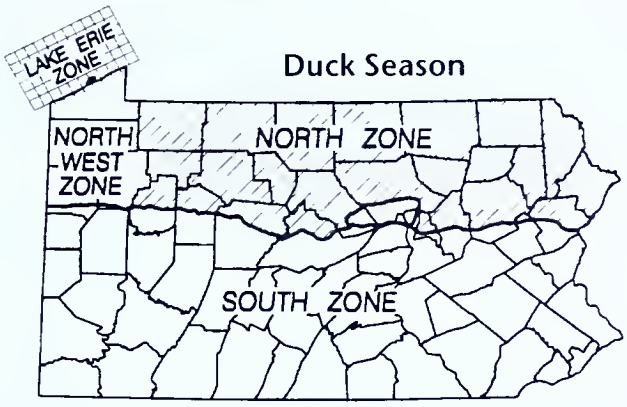
(2) Closed in the area east of I-83 from Maryland line to intersection of US Rt. 30, to intersection of SR 441, east pf SR 441 to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of I-80, and south of I-80 to New Jersey line.

Atlantic brant (All Zones): Oct. 7-Dec. 4, 4 daily, 8 in possession.

Snow geese (All Zones): Nov. 7-March 10, 15 daily, no possession limit.

For the record, an early Canada goose season was held statewide, Sept. 1 - 25.

Duck Seasons - Ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers



Lake Erie Zone, Oct. 30-Nov. 4 and Nov. 7-Jan. 8;
Northwest Zone, Oct. 7-21 and Nov. 4-Dec. 28;
North Zone, Oct. 7-Nov. 25 and Dec. 22-Jan. 10; and
South Zone, Oct. 7-14 and Nov. 15-Jan. 15.

All ducks: 6 daily, 12 in possession; daily limit may not include more than 4 mallards including 2 hens, 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous tree duck, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads and 3 scaup. Possession limit may not include more than 8 mallards including 4 hens, 2 black ducks, 2 pintails, 2 canvasbacks, 2 mottled ducks, 2 fulvous tree ducks, 4 wood ducks, 4 redheads and 6 scaup.

Mergansers: 5 daily, 10 in possession; not more than 1 hooded merganser daily, 2 in possession. **Coots:** 15 daily, 30 in possession.
Harlequin ducks, swans: No open season.

Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area: shooting days are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, one-half hour before sunrise to 12:30 p.m. Ducks: Oct. 7-21 and Nov. 4-Dec. 22. Geese: Nov. 15-Dec. 22.

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area: Goose blinds will be open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to 1:30 p.m. Geese: Nov. 18, 20, 21, 23 and 25; and Dec. 23, 26, 28 and 30.

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day: Saturday, Sept. 30. Open to licensed junior hunters ages 12-15, when properly accompanied, for ducks, mergansers, moorhens and coots. Same daily duck bag limits as regular season.

Hunters encouraged to report banded birds

Hunters are encouraged to use a toll-free number, 1-800-327-BAND, to report banded ducks and geese they harvest. Callers will be requested to provide information on where, when and what species of waterfowl were killed, in addition to the band number. This information is crucial to the successful management of waterfowl.

Middle Creek hunting opportunities

In an effort to take some pressure off the resident Canada goose population at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, the blinds in the controlled hunting area were not open during the September goose season. Middle Creek will be operating the goose blinds in the controlled hunting area during the regular Canada goose season (See dates above). On hunting days, hunters may apply, in person, for a chance at any blinds unclaimed by a reservation holder. This year, three duck blinds also will be available to hunters through a day-of-application drawing.

NO OPEN SEASON: all swans and harlequin ducks

Summary of Federal Regulations

Notice: The material below is only a summary. Each hunter should also consult the actual Federal Regulations which may be found in Title 50, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 20. In addition to State regulations, the following Federal rules also apply to the taking, possession, shipping, transporting and storing of migratory game birds.

Restriction. No person shall take migratory game birds:

— With a trap, snare, net, crossbow, rifle, pistol, revolver, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.
— With a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one piece filler which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun.
— From a sink box (a low floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).
— From or with the aid or use of a car or other motor-driven land conveyance, or any aircraft.
— From or by means of any motor boat or sail boat unless the motor has been completely shut of and/or the sail furled, and its progress therefrom has ceased.
— By the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting, and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such tame birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.
— Using records or tapes of migratory bird calls or sounds, or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls.
— By driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sail boat to put them in the range of hunters.
— By the aid of baiting (placing feed such as corn, wheat, salt or other feed to constitute a lure or enticement), or on or over any baited area. Hunters should be aware that a baited area is considered to be baited for 10 days after the removal of the bait.

Closed Season. No person shall take migratory game birds during the closed season.

Waterfowl hunting is not permitted on Sundays.

Shooting or Falconry Hours. No person shall take migratory game birds except during the hours open to shooting and falconry as prescribed.

Daily Bag Limit. No person shall take in any one day more than one daily bag limit.

Field Possession Limit. No person shall possess more than one daily bag limit while in the field or while returning from the field to one's car, hunting camp, home, etc.

Wanton Waste. All migratory game birds killed or crippled shall be retrieved, if possible, and retained in the custody of the hunter in the field.

Tagging. No person shall give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless the birds are tagged by the hunter with the following information: the hunter's signature and address; the total number of birds involved, by species; and the dates such birds were killed. No person or business shall receive or have in custody any migratory game birds belonging to another person unless such birds are tagged.

Possession of Live Birds. Wounded birds reduced to possession shall be immediately killed and included in the daily bag limit.

Dressing. No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird (except doves) and then transport the birds from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported from the field to one's home or to a migratory bird preservation facility.

Nontoxic Shot, Shot Size. NONTOXIC SHOT must be used while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots in Pennsylvania; the possession of lead shot while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots is unlawful. Shot for waterfowl hunting may not be larger than T size.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. The law requires that each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age and older must carry on his person a valid Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or duck stamp, signed in ink across its face.

For additional information on federal regulations, contact Senior Resident Agent, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Newark, NJ 07114; (201) 645-5910.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

Practice Made Exciting

I WISH I had learned to play the piano. But there wasn't a piano in the house when I was growing up. I would have had to be picked up every day by my aunt, or my dad would have had to drive me to her house, several miles away, to practice on her instrument. Not only would that have been inconvenient for both of them, but I don't know that I would have had the dedication for the practice, practice, practice needed to become good at tickling the ivories.

Nowadays, however, a musical instrument isn't what I need to practice on. The firearms and compound bow I use in hunting demand my attention. I still don't practice enough, but does anyone, ever? Don't we all wish we practiced more? Fortunately, I know some tricks that make me more eager to get out to the range with my rimfires, my deer rifle, flintlock, an occasional handgun and my compound bow.

My Pennsylvania-raised middle-aged friends sometimes reminisce about how they practiced shooting as kids. The setting for target shooting wasn't formal, but had been made safe, by having an adult supervise and the backstop a hillside or rock-free dirt pile. The place was a rural camp, the time of year whenever they could get there before the hunting seasons.

Tin cans and balloons were fastened to an old tree stump and the camp picnic table was used for a shooting bench. Seeing a soda pop can tumble or balloon burst was an easy way to tell a hit, if the shooter aimed, held and squeezed just right. When a young shooter was ready to shoot with the "big boys," he would fire at bottle caps perched on the same stump, making the caps jump when struck by a bullet. Hitting tiny targets was something worth bragging about and signified attainment of a certain level of shooting skill.

If that was so much fun, why did we switch to boring paper targets? Because paper targets give exact sighting-in results. Along the way, the kids who shot for fun and became more accurate from it, grew up and had to do their fathers' part. That is, they became responsible for the zeroing in — essential before any firearm can be used in hunting. A piano needs to be tuned, too, before it can be played properly, but most of us would think that also an uninteresting job. Yet both tasks must be done.

Bob Steiner



AUTHOR'S niece, Lauren Haak, looks at some targets used for sighting in, as well as spinning targets that add extra zest to practice.

Shooting at a paper target off a bench, with sandbags for a solid rest, will reveal to a shooter exactly where his gun is hitting and allow fine adjustments to be made to the sights. Traditional paper targets for rifle shooters are generally small concentric circles, with the center three or four rings black and the outer rings white. They are usually marked off in grids that somewhat coincide with adjustments on the firearm's scope or open sights. Some paper targets are enhanced with vertical and horizontal lines that intersect at the bullseye, to give a reference point for alignment of the vertical and horizontal crosshairs on a scope.

Traditional handgun targets are the black bullseye with concentric white circles beyond. They are somewhat larger than rifle targets and meant to be shot at shorter distances. Handguns should be sandbagged and shot from a benchrest to adjust the sights, just like a rifle. After all, a handgun is basically a short-barreled rifle.

Archers also traditionally use paper targets to adjust their sights. A bow is fit to the individual shooter, like a custom pair of shoes, coordinating sight pin position, nocking point, peep sight, draw length, arrow size and much more, adjusted for one person. That's why each archer must sight in his own bow; no one can do it for him.

Paper targets for archers have had five concentric rings, which has been standard for many years. Depending on the type of round being shot, the target is either a white bullseye or black bullseye, with concentric rings of the other color. The targets and bullseyes vary in size according to the distance being shot. Other archery rounds use a multicolored target of concentric circles, and "going for the gold" means going for the center spot.

In the early zeroing in sessions, the fun comes in shooting tight groups. This means bullet holes in the target paper close to each other — perhaps even touching or cutting the same hole. Shooting groups proves the firearm is truly sighted in and a bullseye wasn't just a lucky shot.

Archers also look for tight groups, but not too tight — those shafts are expensive. An arrow shot directly to the same spot, as another will sometimes insert itself into the back end of the previously shot shaft. This is called a "Robin Hood," which counts only if that's the spot you were aiming for. A Robin Hood looks impressive, but ruins at least one and maybe both arrows. If archers are shooting so accurately that they often smack their arrows together, they post several targets or target centers and shoot one arrow at each.

But what happens after guns and bows have been sighted in? The rest of whether an accurate shot is made under hunting conditions depends on the shooter — his familiarity and ease with the firearm or bow and consistency in shooting form. The shooter must physically perform correctly himself, each and every time. That's where the need for regular practice comes in. But paper targets do not provide enough action to entice most of us to the range regularly. Shooting paper all the time is like practicing scales on the piano keyboard, when what we really want to do is break into a lively ragtime tune.

One of the ways to add zest to practice is to simulate hunting conditions. Paper game animal targets for archery are an improvement over shooting circles, and they are a standard part of preseason hunting practice at many ranges and backyard hay bales. But they are still flat. The first 3-D archery targets I saw were homemade. They were constructed of cardboard sheets, piled and glued together. The solid cardboard mass was then cut with a saw into animal shapes, from raccoons to deer to black bears, covered with burlap and painted lifelike.

One of our local archery clubs used to draw hundreds of bowhunters a year for its cardboard-and-burlap 3-D animal shoots. The club members spent all winter repairing shot-up targets and making new ones. The 3-D targets were inexpensive but labor intensive. When commercial foam 3-D

game animal targets became available, even that club switched to the new models.

I like the 3-D foam game animals for many of the same reasons as other bowhunters. The target is rounded and substantial, just like the real thing, so I can shoot at hunting-simulated angles and practice how best to get my broadhead into the heart and lung area. Paper targets don't give this critical shot placement practice. At a 3-D club shoot, the foam targets are set in the woods, at unmarked distances — as in hunting. Practice at judging distance to the target is essential to the many of us who use sight pins. At home, I like to set up my treestand over my own 3-D target and practice shooting from that elevated position. I know that most of my quality shots in archery season will be from a treestand.

Rifle shooters can vary practice from bullseye paper targets to shooting paper game animals, placed at challenging hunting distances. Beginning hunters especially can use the experience of picking out the heart/lung area aiming spot from the rest of the animal. Plus shooting offhand, using a tree or post as a rest, and shooting from a sitting position, with the gun resting on the knees, are great practice for often-encountered hunting situations.

To get away from the humdrum sameness of shooting at paper, I have added some moving action targets. I picked up spinning metal targets (mine are from Birchwood Casey) that are available in many sporting goods catalogs and shops. Their sturdy metal stakes are set in the ground in front of a safe backstop. The target is a blaze orange aiming circle, with center black spot, mounted on either a flat, circular metal plate or on the standard metal animal target silhouettes — chicken, boar, turkey, ram and prairie dog. I have both the rimfire spinning targets and the ones for handguns up to .44 Magnum.

When struck with a properly placed bullet, the metal plates spin around a horizontal bar. *Clang! Whir-r-r!* The clang of the bullet rings back to the shooter's ear. The spinning not only makes a hit obvious, but adds excitement to the round, just like kids shooting those balloons and tin cans. I appreciate targets like this, that can provide the kind of positive shooting experience youngsters need to spark their interest. They also help us young-at-heart veteran hunters regain an eagerness to practice. I can't shoot my high caliber centerfires at these spinners, but firing my rimfire bolt action rifle, with scope, is similar to practicing with my bigger rifle — the boom and kick just aren't there.

For something different, one local archery club holds nighttime 'coon shoots. They use either commercially printed paper raccoon targets or cardboard hand-cut and hand-painted 'coon images. Reflective, adhesive-backed spots represent the eyes. The 'coon targets are placed on the club's target butts throughout the range trails. Shooting is done after dark at close distances. A flashlight is held on the raccoon target by one of the other shooters, so the eyes glow and the 'coon is illuminated. This is a unique shoot in our area and is perhaps the club's best-attended event of the year. You could do the same with your backyard target, with your buddies or family.

As a lark, I once glued an old deck of cards to a cardboard background, as an archery target. We shot for poker hands, for fun. If the arrow didn't hit the card we wanted, we had to try for a different hand, like four of a kind or two pairs, instead of a flush or straight. Often we "drew" the wrong card, even though all were face up. That meant we needed more practice, which archery poker made more fun. The same or other shooting card games could be played with a rifle or handgun; use a spotting scope to see which card you just picked up and mark the old holes when you start the next round. Only imagination limits how you make firearm or bow practice a game, instead of rote drudgery. □

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

LMOs often help with law enforcement during the hunting season. I enjoy talking with the hunters. It gives me a chance to find out what they are seeing, and what they like and dislike about our game lands.

WHEN YOU think of autumn, with the changing leaves, frosty mornings and all those great outdoor memories, it's October that comes to mind. Of all the pictures on the calendar, October's is always the prettiest, usually very colorful, warm and inviting. The leaves are changing to brilliant crimson, russet and gold. Many people visit our state just to drive around and admire the wonderful scenery. In our area, the roads that parallel the Clarion River have become my favorite for spectacular views and photo opportunities. Blowing, raking and mowing are common as people try to keep ahead of the falling leaves that pile up on their lawns. Our kids stay busy gathering pretty ones to press as we take our woodland Sunday walks to enjoy the Lord's wonderful creation. Apple pies and grape jelly are on the way, and canning jars become valuable. Hockey season starts, and the night October sky is alive with the rays of spotlights. October seems to be everyone's favorite month.

Week One

In early October we change from our summer to winter uniforms. This is a welcome change for the cold nights, but long sleeves and heavier pants make it uncomfortable on warm days.

While out with the crews we see the results of all the work done in past months. The grain we planted in the spring is being used, as we notice lots of rabbits and turkeys. Because of the dry weather, the frog ponds and impoundments the guys created act like magnets to wildlife. Acorns are so abundant it's like walking on marbles in the woods, and grapes, apples, beechnuts, cherries and hickories are being heavily used.

Hal Korber



PHEASANT STOCKING becomes a top priority for LMOs and their crews in October.

We must realize, however, that the mast we find in the woods this time of year is not the staple for most species. It's a seasonal food to allow wildlife to fatten up before we get into the tougher times of winter. This fall abundance can help carry many species through the cold and lean times, but come spring they will need other food sources. It's these other food sources we try to provide on game lands.

The food and cover crews finish posting signs on game lands, and except for a few road repairs, we are ready for the hunters. Archers will set up stands on the edges of our food plots or trails leading to these areas, others will roust out pheasants and rabbits by working their dogs along our border cuts and in our strip-mowed food plots. We sometimes feel like grandmothers preparing for holiday company. Making sure things are done, decorated and looking nice, hoping our "company" (decked out in orange suits) will be pleased and enjoy themselves. Our first obligation is to the wildlife, but we never forget the hunters. It's because of the hunters that we are able to accomplish this habitat work year after year for the resource.

Everett and Dave are using the dozer to smooth out some rough areas along the Empire Ridge Road on SGL 54, so that next spring we can plant a few patches of grain there. They also replace a bad culvert on an adjacent road, which will allow us access during winter to perform some additional border cutting. Before they finish with the dozer they will do some road grading and clear some fallen logs and debris from a grassy road to allow hunter access and permit it to be mowed next summer.

I find myself at the Clarion County Court House with WCO Roger Hartless and WCO Al Scott, attending a preliminary hearing on the timber theft case we worked on a couple of months ago. Things go well for us, and the defendants will pay fines, damages, court costs and spend time in jail for this offense. I'm sure they would now agree that it wasn't worth the couple hundred dollars they made by selling the stolen trees.

Saturday marks the first day of the long awaited archery season, and there seems to be good hunting pressure in the northern tier of my group.

Week Two

Gary and Willard start the week by repairing the doors on one of our storage barns on SGL 63. Building repairs are an ongoing process for us, but the benefits far outweigh the cost and time of maintenance. We use our storage buildings a lot, but it still seems like we don't have enough room.

In the afternoon I swing through SGL 74 and come upon a couple of nonresident hunters with a 5-point buck. Lee Alderson from Michigan got the deer from a treestand at the edge of one of our clover plots. Lee's hunting companion is Tom Smith from Florida, and after talking to him, I find out that in the spring he shot a gobbler less than 100 yards from where Lee harvested the buck. Tom used to live in Pennsylvania, and these longtime friends get together to hunt here every year.

Both crews are busy with preseason pheasant releases. They get help from WCOs and deputies, and in Jefferson County many of the local clubs help. Thanks to Allen Campbell, president of the Jefferson County Federation of Sportsman's Clubs, we have the birds stocked in a matter of hours, which means the birds spend a minimum amount of time in the crates.

I'm hosting a grassland bird habitat management meeting at SGL 63. Game Commission biologist Dan Brauning and I meet with people from Clarion University and the Audubon Society. We discuss planting, mowing, conifer topping, border cuts, liming and controlled burning as management tools we plan to use on a future project.

I attend the Jefferson County annual

deputy dinner meeting at the Roseville Grange. I update everyone on what the crews are accomplishing on our game lands. The deputies are our main local contacts to the public, and by keeping them informed they are able to help inform the public. District WCOs Mike Girosky and Roger Hartless give the main presentation, and Law Enforcement Supervisor Jim Egley updates everyone on region and statewide topics relating to the upcoming season.

The end of the week brings the opening of early small game season. It's good to see so many young hunters out for this early season. I talk with many first time hunters and sense the excitement and anticipation in their voices as they tell me about their first day in the field.

Week Three

Gary and the Clarion County crew are grading a road on SGL 74 near Strattanville. We needed to open up the ditches and replace an existing culvert, as well as remove some encroaching trees. As I pull into the area to check on their progress, a fellow out working his dog but not carrying a firearm flags me down. He tells me about a couple of other guys over the crest of the hill hunting pheasants. He says he saw them flush a pheasant and shoot at it. I park and walk up to get a better look. I find the guys and check them out; they have a grouse but no pheasant. They claimed that they were hunting only grouse. I went back to the first fellow and explained to him that if he were willing to testify in court, I would continue this investigation. He said that he was unwilling to do that. Without his testimony I would have no evidence, and I wondered if they really did shoot at a pheasant or whether the man was mad because they interfered with his dog training. I proceed on to help the crew. I spend a couple of hours there and then leave to attend a meeting with our Farm-Game manager Tom Deitz and a Farm-Game cooperator to discuss some habitat work on one of his properties. We give him some guidance and advise him on managing the area for small game.

The next day I'm back on SGL 63 to inspect work on a timber sale. SGL 63 is in Clarion County near Shippenville. The terrain on this 3,400-acre tract is hilly interspersed with 250 acres of openings cultivated on rotation. This is a terrific all-around game lands; there is much small game habitat with healthy populations of squirrels and rabbits. We stock many pheasants here and have an area managed for grouse. It seems like we have turkeys behind every tree, and several nice bucks are harvested here every year. The crew and I always see bears after the berries ripen, and I know they don't leave before bear season. This game lands has it all, and we are proud to intensively manage much of it. We have wetland impoundments here and even have good bluebird nesting success. There are 18 parking lots scattered around the area for hunters and 20 miles of maintained roads to hike on.

Week Four

The crew is busy with inseason pheasant stockings now. There are a couple of places we don't stock until after shooting hours, because of safety concerns. These areas have tall hedgerows, and in the past we would release the birds out of the crates only to get showered with shot pellets. It was during one of these after-hour releases that Gary and I met a man and his boy in one of our parking lots. They had come in from hunting and were getting ready to leave when we pulled in with a truckload of pheasants. We talked with them a few minutes, and I invited the boy to help us. Gary showed him how to coax the birds out of the crates with his arm, and soon he was a pro at it. I showed him how to put a pheasant to sleep by tucking its head under the wing. I'm not sure who had a better time, the boy or us. Spending those few minutes with that young man is something he will always remember, and it was one of the most satisfying times I've had in this

job, and one of the reasons I got into this work.

We LMOs often help with law enforcement this time of year, especially on the high-pressure hunting days. I enjoy talking with the hunters using our game lands. It gives me a chance to get some feedback on what they are seeing, abundance of wildlife, what they like and dislike. Some of them even give me their thoughts for habitat projects they would like to see. It also gives me an opportunity to check their license, pet their dog, and tell them about what the crews are doing.

I spend the rest of the week scheduling work for our Royer cutting machine and mapping out these areas, evaluating existing habitats and determining what areas will need conifers planted for winter thermal cover. I also spend time formulating ideas for National Wild Turkey Federation Superfund projects.

The end of the month once again brings paperwork and hours in front of the computer. It seems harder than usual to keep my mind from drifting back into the field, as I look at that picture on the calendar and golden leaves out the window. My thoughts drift back to those pleasant times as a youngster when I hunted with my dad and grandfather. If only we could go back for just one day. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Muzzleloading Search

Circle the 11 hidden words associated with muzzleloading below. (Words do not go vertical.)

L E R R A B R E E C H T

H A M M E R A M R O D O

K I F R I Z Z E N R E G G I R T

E L Z Z U M N T H I M B L E L

B L A C K P O W D E R E L P P I N

C L W E D G E P I N F

Copy the uncircled letters and unscramble.

Type of lock: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

answers on p. 64

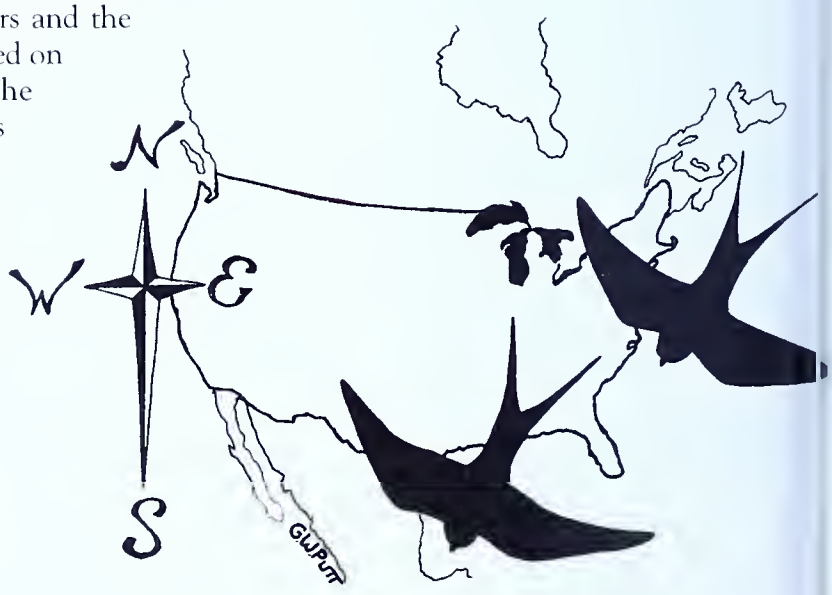
Five billion birds migrate in the Western Hemisphere, heading primarily for the lowlands of southern Mexico and Central America.

South for the Winter

SOMETIME in mid to late August the first wave of migrating warblers moves through our yard. They come early in the morning to feed after flying much of the night. Their appearance signals the passing of the first cold front with a north wind and clear skies that helps them fly more quickly and easily. This push sometimes doubles their speed.

Migrating birds use innate compasses to find their way to both their summer and winter homes. The night migrants have one based on the stars and the day migrants one based on the sun's position. The immature songbirds going south for the first time use not only their innate knowledge of time and distance, but also what they learn on their own during that first flight.

According to scientists who have been studying bird migration for decades, night migrants teach themselves the positions of the stars, particularly that of the unmoving North Star and the spatial relationships among the constellations. They also depend on the patterns of polarized light in the sky at sunrise and sunset to identify true north. In addition to sensing the earth's magnetic field, both day and night migrants may be able to sense the low-frequency sound waves made by the ocean's surf and trade winds.



Changes in day length signal their internal clock that it's time to begin migration. Night migrants become restless when it's dark, and all migrants start changing their diets by eating foods that help them build up their normal three to five percent body fat to, in migratory songbirds, as much as 30 to 50 percent. This energy-giving fat allows them to travel as far as 620 miles without eating.

Five billion birds migrate in the Western Hemisphere, heading primarily for the lowlands of southern Mexico and Central America, followed by the West Indies and northern South America. Most small birds are night migrants, traveling singly and flying below 2,000 feet at 20 to 30 miles an hour. They take off usually between 30 to 45 minutes after dark and land long before dawn.

Why they migrate at night is not so clear, but researchers theorize that they are better able to feed and build up reserves during the day. Also, the air is calmer and it's cooler at night, so the migrants are not as likely to dehydrate.

Day songbird migrants are swallows, swifts, robins, flickers, hummingbirds and the jay family, although why they prefer to fly during the day is not clear either, except that swallows and swifts catch insects on the wing.

They start shortly after dawn and reach a peak at 10 a.m., flying in flocks instead of individually like the night migrants, but flying at the same speed and height.

Raptors are also day fliers, because they rely heavily on soaring flight that saves them a lot of energy. Clumps of warm, rising air, or thermals, from mid-morning to mid-afternoon move them along swiftly and sometimes as high as 5,000 feet.

Shorebirds and waterfowl, which learn migration routes from their parents and the rest of the flock, mostly fly during the day, but they fly as high as 15,000 to 22,000 feet at 30 to 50 miles an hour.

There are three kinds of migrants. Complete migrants leave their breeding range entirely and migrate to a separate winter range. Examples include black-throated green warblers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, and chimney swifts.

Partial migrants leave only a portion of their breeding range, for instance, song sparrows, robins and red-tailed hawks. Irruptive migrants are not seasonally or geographically predictable but follow food sources. Good examples in our area are evening grosbeaks, pine siskins and common redpolls.

There are also three kinds of migration. Most common here is the north/south migrants. Some, though, travel east/west, most notably our tundra swans. And, in the western United States, several species migrate up and down high mountains.

Every autumn I can depend on seeing migrants, but the cast of characters varies. Still, there are some dependable ones. Black-throated green and yellow-rumped warblers are always our most common warbler species, followed by black-and-white and black-throated blue warblers. Last September I also saw a Wilson's warbler on September 19 and a Nashville on September 25.

But October is our peak autumn migration month. October 3 brought me both a magnolia and golden-winged warbler as well as red-breasted nuthatches. The following day white-throated sparrows and ruby-crowned kinglets appeared for the first time since the previous April. The first wintering dark-eyed juncos also arrived that day, because at the same time our summer visitors are leaving, our winter visitors are replacing them.

By mid-October, most of the Neotropical migrants — scarlet tanagers, ovenbirds, wood thrushes, etc. — are gone. Those that migrate only to the southern United States — hermit thrushes, yellow-rumped warblers, eastern towhees, eastern phoebes, blue-headed vireos, for instance — stay longer, and every year here I record at least one of those species in early November.

Raptor watching is another highlight of

October. Besides using thermals, raptors also use updrafts caused by wind that is deflected off ridges. The longer the ridge and the steadier the wind, the farther a raptor can fly with little use of its own energy. Our ridge, part of the Bald Eagle Mountain that is the westernmost in the ridge-and-valley province, may not rival Hawk Mountain's migration, but there are days when sitting on top of First Field is rewarding. Mostly, I see dozens of sharp-shinned and red-tailed hawks, along with turkey vultures, but sometimes I'm surprised by more spectacular species.

Last October 18 it was windy and clearing after a cold front that had moved in overnight. Lying on top of First Field, watching the shape shifting of kaleidoscopic clouds, I also watched a parade of redtails and sharpies zipping past high in the sky. Although I was earthbound, I felt as if I had been lifted into another realm of wind and sun and clouds.

Then, suddenly, I spotted a much larger, dark bird sailing past high above me. From below, the only distinguishing marks were the flashing white splotch on each wing and a long white tail rimmed with black. It was an immature golden eagle.

According to the recently published *The Birds of Pennsylvania* by McWilliams and Brauning, back on November 6, 1990, 22 golden eagles flew past the Bald Eagle Mountain Fire Tower, which is 14 miles northeast of us. Sightings there continue to make our mountain one of the best places to see golden eagles in migration.

Seeing the golden eagle was the highlight of my October migration watching, but November brought its own exciting migrants. On the first of the month, tundra swans called so high in the sky I couldn't see them. I also put up my bird feeders this month.

Five days later three pine siskins arrived. I held out hope throughout the month and into December that it would be another irruptive year, because a couple pine siskins appeared off and on and even common redpolls once in mid-December. But it was not to be.

On the other hand, winter residents, such as tree sparrows, which began arriving on November 9, were in higher numbers than usual. We also had more frequent sightings of purple finches and a wider selection and number of partial migrants that remained here — white-throated and song sparrows, robins by the hundreds, bluebirds, redtails and sharp-shinned hawks. The sharpies have been staying north in larger numbers because of the easy prey at bird feeders.

After arriving in late September to hawk for grasshoppers, a male kestrel also made infrequent appearances over the winter. Female kestrels migrate three weeks to a month sooner than males, and those that winter in Pennsylvania are always males, as we've discovered.

My best migrant sighting, though, occurred on a clear and breezy November 8. I walked over to Greenbrier Trail in the midst of the 8-year-old recovering clearcut we purchased after the damage was done. It was full of birds scratching among fallen wild grapes — white-throated sparrows and robins by the dozens. Then, in one group, I noticed blackbirds, too. They didn't look like either European starlings or red-winged blackbirds, so I examined them more closely. Ten rusty blackbirds mingled with the others, eating grapes.

These birds, which breed mostly in the boreal woods of Canada and the northern United States, are black with yellow eyes during the breeding season. But they are named for their rusty color change in fall and winter. The females also display a broad, buffy eyebrow and are more bronze on their underparts than the males, which retain more black and only a faint eyebrow.

I rarely see rusty blackbirds during migration, but I had no idea that they have shown the greatest population decline of all bird species in the last 100 years. Because they are, after all, only blackbirds, not too much attention had been paid to

them until ornithologists Russell Greenberg and Sam Droege, using a variety of bird surveys to assess their population, discovered a 92.8 percent decline in Breeding Bird Surveys from 1966 to 1996, an 89.6 percent decline on Christmas Bird Counts from 1958 to 1988, and a 92.1 percent decline between 1970 and 1995 on the Quebec Checklists Program.

They also looked at 84 published state and regional accounts of the birds from before 1920 to after 1980, as well as other published checklists, regional summaries and data from the Migration Card Program that ran from the 1880s through the 1940s, and found that the decline began in the early part of the 20th century but increased rapidly in recent decades, particularly the 1970s.



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Why rusty blackbirds have declined so precipitously is not clear. That's because so little is known about their breeding ecology and behavior that ornithologists must learn more about these overlooked birds before drawing any conclusions about their decline. However, they speculate that because rusty blackbirds like wooded wetlands throughout most of the year, the loss and degradation of that habitat may be the answer.

On the other hand, because much of the checklist data was collected in refuges where the habitat is still good, that can't be the whole answer. Neither can the acidification of their habitat, which may kill their invertebrate wetland prey, or the logging of wetland forests and the construction of large hydroelectric dams that flood boreal forest habitat. No doubt a complex of reasons will emerge if enough research is done on these handsome birds.

Knowing all this, I treasured my sighting of the 10 rusty blackbirds eating wild grapes on our dry mountaintop. Such discoveries are what make migration watching my favorite outdoor activity in autumn. □

DAYS OF YORE



CASSVILLE Hunting Club, Huntingdon Co., approximately 1915. Hunt took place in the "Barrens." From L to R: Reed Corbin, Jesse Chilcote, Dick Corbin, Charlie Corbin, Joe Horton, Frank Stever, Emory Corbin, David Stever, "Humpy" Hoover, Ebert Evans, John Horton, Huston "Pickle" Prow, and Billy McCorkle.

Knowing precisely where to direct your arrows and having the patience to wait until you can hit that "sweet spot" is the key to bowhunting success.

Deer: Aiming, Arrows and Anatomy

THE PHONE RANG about an hour after dark. "I hit one just before quitting time out at Anderson's." The anxious voice at the other end of the line belonged to my friend Jeff. "It was a buck, a nice one, but with a strange rack on the right side," he said with almost breathless excitement, "I think I got a good hit on it. I called Mike and he's going to meet me out there in about 20 minutes."

"Say no more," I interrupted. "I'll see you there."

Like every other group of bowhunters I know, Jeff, Mike and I have an unspoken code in situations such as this. When it comes to trailing chores, any time, any place, we're there for each other.



We met Jeff at the farm and he recreated the scene for us. He told us he ambushed the buck from a treestand as it entered a field. He had a clear shot at 15 yards. Although he didn't see where the arrow



PRACTICE on 3-D targets with vitals simulated by balloons is a great way to prepare for the real thing. In the 3-D deer target cross section, left, balloons approximate positions of heart and lungs. Trajectory of upper arrow, shot from a height of 20 feet and distance of five yards pierces one lung and, possibly, the heart. This is a fatal hit but may result in a tracking chore. Trajectory of lower arrow, shot from a height of 20 feet at 20 yards, pierces both lungs. This is an ideal hit and animal should be recovered within 50 yards.

had hit, he watched the deer react to the shot, stumble then stagger off. Jeff waited about 15 minutes, descended the tree and quickly found a blood trail. "I marked the last spot of blood I found and left to call you guys," he told us. "I didn't want to push the buck, but it shouldn't be very far."

By flashlight, we found the small pool of blood Jeff had marked and the search began. It wasn't easy to say which of the two evaporated faster — the blood trail or Jeff's confidence. The trail went from blotchy to spotty to non-existent within 200 yards or so. The three of us fanned out and searched for at least another hour without finding even another drop of blood. Jeff replayed the shot in his mind. Although he didn't see where the arrow had entered, he began to suspect the worst. "I might have hit him a little high," he speculated. "Maybe I missed the vitals." We finally concluded that Jeff must have gotten a bad hit after all. While we suspected the buck would survive, Jeff and I both returned to the spot the following day to scour the area thoroughly in daylight. A solid two hours of searching proved fruitless.

Evidence that this deer had, indeed, survived would surface in March when another friend of ours, while walking his dog on the same farm, discovered the buck's shed antlers with the right side's unmistakable configuration. Jeff was heartened to know the buck had recovered from his shot, but it may be that if Jeff had concentrated more on the buck's vitals and less on its unusual headgear, he might have filled his archery tag that year.

Jeff's experience probably mirrors that of too many other Keystone State archers. You take an easy shot at a deer and you don't quite see precisely where your arrow strikes the animal. But other signs — the sound of the *thwack* of arrow into flesh and the reaction of the animal — indicate you've made a good hit.

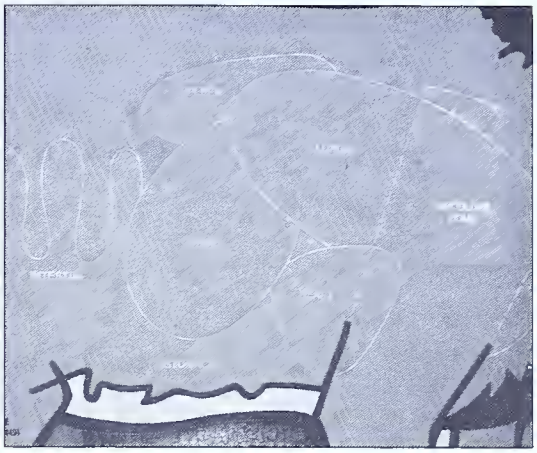
But somehow you didn't. It's possible, and not uncommon, for an arrow to pass through a deer's body and result only in a flesh wound. Some archers refer to the fleshy area beneath a deer's spine and above its vitals as "the undead zone." An arrow that passes through this area and fails to sever a major blood vessel will result in the same scenario described at the opening of this piece.

For any bowhunter worthy of the name, there's nothing more discouraging or disheartening than wounding a game animal and then failing to recover it. Patience in waiting to follow up a shot and superior tracking skills may help you recover a whitetail shot with a bow, but they won't mean a thing if you don't put your arrow in the right place. How can you learn to do this with consistency? An understanding of the whitetail's anatomy and very basic understanding of the laws of physics should help. Let's take a look.

The Perfect Shot

There's little discussion among seasoned archers as to what the best shot placement on a whitetail is — the double-lung. Perforate both lungs and the deer's not going far. Virtually every double-lung hit deer I've taken has dropped within 50 yards. Hit just one lung and you should still tag your deer, but you may have to trail it three or four times as far to recover it. From a bowhunting perspective, the nice thing about the lungs is that it's the single largest target on any deer. Sometimes I'll inflate party balloons and tack them onto the vitals of my 3-D targets. When positioned correctly, they provide excellent (and dramatic) practice for making that perfect shot. On a live deer, your best bet is to aim at the lower two-thirds of the heart/lung cavity. This way you can avoid the shoulder blade, and if you happen to hit too far back (i.e. the deer is walking) you should still catch the liver — another fatal hit.

There are some hunters who believe that the perfect shot is the spine shot and, under some circumstances, they may be right. In most cases, a hit that severs the spine is the result of a poor release that



CARDBOARD TARGETS with vital organs roughed in help prepare archers to focus on the vitals of a deer.



turned into a lucky shot. It's tough to pass up the basketball-size chest cavity for a much more challenging shot at the animal's rope of spine. The only time I've intentionally attempted a spine shot was on a buck standing almost directly beneath me. He had responded to a few grunt calls and come in like a maniac. I drew my bow and waited for the 9-point to turn broadside. He never did, so I finally decided to aim between his shoulder blades. I was at least 25 feet above him in a treestand, so I had a pretty fair shot at the spine, and even if I missed right or left the arrow would still penetrate the chest cavity.

Somehow I put the arrow an inch or two to the left of the buck's spine and he bolted off like the wind. The broadhead had found his heart, however, and I recovered him within 80 yards. The best argument for a spine shot is that, when successful, it anchors the deer on the spot. The shot may kill the deer, but just as often you'll have to put another arrow into its vitals. For archers hunting in populated areas where a wounded deer may run into a neighboring backyard, or where there's fear another archer may tag "your" deer, a spine shot may make sense. All things being equal, however, my advice is to go for the double-lung hit instead.

Less Than Perfect Shots

As for heart shots, they're miles tougher to make than lung shots and kill no quicker than the double-lung. With the heart, you're shooting at a smaller organ (about the size of your balled fist, versus the basketball-size target provided by the lungs) that is found low and forward in the deer's chest cavity. This placement helps protect the heart to a far greater extent than the lungs. The heart is shielded by the deer's ribs and leg bones on the side, shoulder blades and ribs from above, and ribs in front. The heart is most vulnerable on a quartering away shot, but the lungs are still always the best choice.

Shots that penetrate the stomach, kidneys or femoral arteries are all fatal hits, but none of them are ever intentional. Shots at the animal's neck or head are potentially fatal, but I would never recommend this. The first deer I ever killed with a bow was a button buck at 35 yards. My first shot hit a branch and went wild, and my second shot fell short. Amazingly, the deer hung around and turned broadside long enough for me to take a third shot. I placed my 30-yard pin a tad high and right behind the shoulder. At the shot, the deer slammed to the ground as if it had been pole-axed. Its tail flicked once and that was it. I was amazed at how deadly a bow could be. When I walked up to the animal I discovered why. Somehow, and I've never quite figured it out, my arrow had pen-

etrated the deer's skull, precisely between the eyes. The shot was instantly fatal, but it wasn't a shot I was trying to make, or one I would advise anyone to attempt. The outcome was venison in the freezer, but it wasn't a shot I was proud of.

Bad to the Bone

Arrows are not bullets. A poorly placed bullet will often cause death by shock. Not so with an arrow. A bullet will also bust through any bone a whitetail's skeletal structure can place in its way. Although some broadhead manufacturers boast about their product's bone-piercing capabilities, even if you're drawing 90 pounds, you need to avoid hitting large bones if you expect to recover your game. Whitetail ribs are relatively fragile and don't put up much resistance to modern archery tackle. Shoulder bones, however, are another story.

The shoulder and shoulder blade of a whitetail create problems with shot placement when the animal is walking directly toward or quartering in the direction of the archer. These kinds of shots should be avoided. On broadside shots or quartering away shots, the shoulder bones are only a problem when the animal's facing front leg sweeps back as it walks, obstructing the heart-lung area. Ideally, the shot should not be taken until the facing leg steps forward, thus exposing the vitals, or until the deer is standing perfectly still and not alerted.

High Anxiety

The shot angles created by treestand hunting, in many cases, require the archer to make significant adjustments in attempting to send an arrow through a deer's vitals. The higher the stand and the closer the deer, the steeper and more difficult the shot. If the deer is too close to the stand with a shot approaching 90 degrees, penetration of both lungs becomes a virtual impossibility. I like to hunt from heights of 25 to 30 feet — elevations that exceed those preferred by most archers. Ninety percent of the shots I attempt are at deer within 25 yards. Ideally, the deer will be out at a distance of 20 to 25 yards when I release the arrow. Any closer and I have a physics problem on my hands (something which happens more often than not).

As treestand elevation increases and range decreases, the ideal aiming point climbs up the deer's back towards the spine. At 20 yards and out (assuming an elevation less than 30 feet) centering the pin directly behind the shoulder at the body's horizontal midline should still catch both lungs. This changes dramatically as the range decreases. Up to a point you'll still pierce one lung, but once the deer gets within five yards or so, a shot at the centerline may produce no more than a flesh wound. To compensate for this, hold the pin a few inches below the spine. Ideally, the arrow will cut through the top of the near lung and still pierce the bottom of the far lung before it exits the deer's brisket low on the far side. This top and bottom feat goes from difficult to impossible as the distance decreases.

The position of the deer in relation to the hunter also becomes more critical from higher elevations. Steep angles make vulnerable vital areas smaller and more difficult to hit. In most cases, the 20/20 rule applies here. The 20/20 rule, incidentally, says that the ideal shot on a deer from a treestand is from an altitude of 20 feet at 20 yards. The more the distance is reduced to fewer than 20 yards, the more mental math the archer must perform to adjust the shot. If you're lower than 20 feet, you stand a greater risk of detection, but the deer can move much closer without creating such a severely acute shot angle. Get much higher than 20 feet and the law of diminishing returns starts to apply with too many shots, even those beyond 20 yards, requiring major adjustments to compensate for the steep angle.

Still Life

The last thing an archer needs to consider is the effect a deer's movement has

on shot placement. Here's my best advice about shooting at a moving deer: if at all possible, avoid it. While all of us have probably taken a shot at a deer in motion and many of us have filled our tags as a result, shots at moving deer are formulas for disaster (like my friend at the beginning of this article).

I've killed deer walking and even trotting slowly past my stand, but in each case a shot at the lung area resulted in a hit back in the liver or gut. The more slowly a deer is moving and the closer it is, the more likely you are to hit the vitals, but the chances for a mistake are infinitely greater than on a standing deer. "Leading" a moving deer is an interesting notion with a bow and arrow, but if you're like me, it's also an alien concept. If you've practiced on stationary targets during the off season, that's conditioning that makes it almost impossible to aim at a non-vital area. Then, if the deer reacts to the string and slams on the brakes, you end up with a miss or a bad hit anyway.

Your best bet is to wait until the deer stops, or to grunt and make him stop, before releasing the arrow. The longer the range and the faster the deer is moving, the greater the margin for error. Not too many seasons ago I took a shot at a walking buck 30 yards away. The shot was accurate, but the step and a half the buck took between release and impact transformed a perfect double-lung shot into a gut shot. I still recovered the deer, but it was more of an ordeal than it should have been. The next time I had a walking buck come in, I drew the bow, took aim and grunted. The buck stopped in its tracks and the arrow hit precisely where I was aiming, and he dropped within 60 yards.

One other situation that may influence your aiming point is an alerted deer. More than once I've made the mistake of drawing my bow at an inopportune moment, only to have the deer detect the sound or motion and then look right at me, ears pricked, ready to bolt. A likely outcome of this scenario is a bad hit high or a miss over the deer's back. This result is from the deer jumping the string. The moment you release the arrow, an alerted deer tends to gather its legs beneath itself, hunching down as much as two feet before springing away. This instinctive dropping motion will invariably cause an otherwise perfectly aimed arrow to sail just over the animal's back.

Once you anticipate that the deer is alerted and most likely to jump the string, you might be wise not to risk any shot at all. Another remedy is to hold low and a bit back.

About seven years ago I was hunting the late season with an unfilled antlerless permit. A doe came strolling right by my stand, about 15 yards away. The lack of foliage no doubt contributed to the doe's detecting me as I drew back my bow, and the deer was totally alerted and staring right at me. Anticipating her reaction to the string, I altered my aiming point and held about two inches below her brisket, just behind the front leg. If she didn't jump the string, I would miss low. If she did, I calculated, the arrow would pass directly through the vitals. As it turned out, my anticipation was accurate, but my calculations were a little off.

She jumped the string big time, so much so that the arrow caught her right in the spine of her neck, dropping her right on the spot. Had I held another foot lower and a foot back, I would have put the shot in the chest cavity. Would I make those adjustments next time? Probably not. More likely I would just pass on the shot — there are just too many variables with an alerted deer, even one at close range.

The ultimate key to success in bowhunting is patience, and the patience to wait for that perfect broadside or quartering lung shot on a standing deer at 20 yards or less is no small part of that key. And always keep in mind that when you shoot is as important as where you aim in determining where you hit. □

From shot out barrels to high brass shotshells signifying higher velocity and more power, let's debunk some . . .

Myths and Fables

THE FOLLOWING episode took place in a local country store long before World War II. I can't remember the hunters involved, but the discussion went something like this:

"I told you not to use a .250-3000 for deer, Bill, but you were taken in by the fancy claim that the bullet was the fastest thing around," one man said to another.

"I know you warned me about a fast bullet shooting high, but I didn't think it would be that high on a 150-yard shot," the other replied.

"Believe me, that bullet traveled flat for about 75 yards and then started up. By the time it reached the buck, it was a foot or more high, and you shot right over it."

"I've learned my lesson," the young fellow lamented. "But I can't understand why they'd put something like this on the market."

As I mentioned, those weren't the exact words, but I'm close. What still bothers me is that I believed it implicitly, even though my brother Dan pointed out that a bullet cannot rise on its own, because that was against the law of gravity. Dan's advice didn't sink in, though, because back then boys in grade school weren't up on such things as the unseen law of gravity.

Back when this conversation took place, ballistic sheets were not readily available. Most of what was available came from gun and ammunition makers. Apparently, some gun writers had factory sources for ballistic data and would feed it into their articles. Because handloading was not common, and home chronographs and chamber pressure measuring devices were unheard of, the hunter/shooter of that era depended on results in the field to determine the killing potential of a particular cartridge.

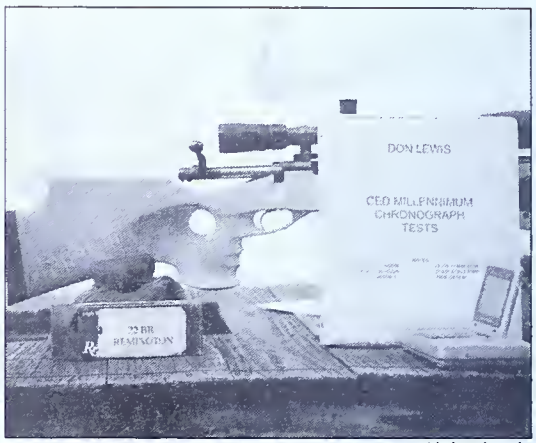
An old hunter I knew with many years of rabbit hunting experience scoffed at using low brass shells. His reasoning was that high brass shells were more powerful and would reach out farther due to their higher velocities. Today, we know that high brass does not mean power or speed. High brass applies only to the inner base wad and is an indication of the inner volume of the case. High or low outside brass is no indication of volume, strength or loading potential. Often a trap or field load, which has low outside brass will actually use a high inner base wad to reduce volume and better accommodate its lighter charge. What the old gentleman didn't know was that some low brass loads had velocities comparable to his high brass loads. High brass loads with a lower inner base hold more shot. His only real gain was a denser pattern.

The "shot out" barrel myth has not lost one foot of ground in a hundred years of shooting. Many people are quick to assume



Helen Lewis

YEARS AGO handloading was uncommon and home chronographs and chamber pressure measuring devices were unheard of. Not so today, as chronographs and good record keeping allow shooters to fine tune loads and predict how they'll perform in the field.



Helen Lewis

that if a rifle is old, the barrel is shot out. Barrel wear, however, is based on the amount of powder that is burned through it. This simply means that a super magnum's barrel will wear out quicker than a barrel on a conventional big game rifle. A Remington 7mm Magnum barrel will "washout" sooner than a .270's. Lighter loads in the 7mm Remington Magnum will increase barrel life, but it's worth noting that many big game hunters desire magnum cartridges for the extra performance they offer. In a sense, it's counterproductive to use lighter powder charges.

Barrels do succumb to heavy powder charges, but few hunters will ever fire enough cartridges to burn out a barrel. One time I figured the average big game rifle had fewer than two boxes of ammo fired out of it per year. That means that over a 30-year span, the rifle is fired less than 1,200 times. In all fairness, my estimate may be high, because many big game rifles do not have even a box of ammo fired through them per year. Let's say each round fired had a powder charge weighing 55 grains. That equals 66,000 grains divided by 7,000 grains (the amount of grains in a pound of powder), which shows that the rifle consumed a little more than nine pounds of powder. In rapid-fire competition, nine pounds of powder may take a toll on the barrel throat, but most big game hunting doesn't include rapid firing.

I asked a famous barrel maker how many rounds could be fired through a match barrel before it starts to lose "critical" accuracy. He walked to his gun cabinet and picked out a .22-250 heavy barrel competition rifle. As I examined the rifle, which looked new, he leafed through a small notebook. "According to my records this barrel has fired more than 1,400 rounds in competition, and my bore scope shows some throat deterioration. From a competitive standpoint, its critical accuracy (the potential to put all its shots in one hole at 100 yards) is diminishing. I can move the throat ahead and it will be as good as new. However, let me point out that even in its present condition, it's still a whale of a groundhog rifle and could be fired in the field for years before it would lose varmint hunting accuracy."

Note that he mentioned only the throat as being eroded. Apparently, the bore itself was still in excellent condition after more than 1,400 rounds. Competitive shooters and varmint hunters fire a large number of shots in a short amount of time. I recall firing more than 85 rounds from two Remington .223s in less than two hours. Varmint hunters can control how many shots they fire from a rifle by simply

stopping at a certain point. Competitive shooters can't do that. Rapid shooting and sustained fire are facts of life the competitive shooter has to deal with. We know that as a barrel heats up from continued firing, so does the susceptibility to fouling and also erosion.

Barrels are rarely shot out. I've explained why. However, they do succumb to neglect or improper cleaning. Neglect is simply the owner's failure to dry a wet bore, keep a light coating of oil in the barrel when it will be idle for a long period of time, and use cleaning rods and solutions that will not harm the bore.

I don't want to dwell on specific products, but jointed brass and aluminum rods, if not used carefully, can do more harm than good. A one-piece steel rod in conjunction with a rod guide or muzzle cone is an ideal setup. Scrapings from soft rods are deposited in the bore as the rod is worked back and forth. These might be almost invisible to the eye, but they are harmful nonetheless. A rod guide or bore cone will help, but great care must be used to keep soft rods from buckling and rubbing against the bore.

It's mandatory to use a muzzle cone on pumps and levers. Without a cone to hold the rod in alignment with the bore, the rod rubs against the crown in the muzzle and makes it uneven. If the crown is not perfect, gases will escape prematurely around the base of the bullet causing it to wobble in flight. With bolt action rifles a plastic rod guide in the action to hold the rod straight will suffice, but a super accurate bolt action varmint rifle should have a steel rod guide designed for that particular action.

For years the corrosive primer was a barrel's greatest enemy, and a bore had to be swabbed constantly. The replacement of the mercuric primer brought some relief, but corrosion from propellants still has to be dealt with. Some of the older powders had a high nitroglycerine content that produced a super hot flame. To show what I mean, back when the 1903 Springfield was introduced using a 220-grain round nose bullet at 2,200 feet per second, barrel life was fewer than 1,000 rounds. This was due to the high nitroglycerine content and the resulting high flame temperatures of the powders then in use.

Those powders are gone, but erosion from propellants will still probably remain the number one factor in barrel wear in the foreseeable future. I'm certain fans of ball type powders will quickly point out that they have a distinct advantage over extruded powders. Their argument sounds good, but the truth is there is no significant difference in bore life (or even accuracy) when using either extruded powders or spherical (ball) powders. It's true the testing was done on the 30-caliber and the 7.62mm NATO Match ammunition, but it's safe to say the same will hold true for most other cartridges.

Because I'm discussing propellants, now is a good time to put to rest another myth that has lingered for years. It deals with how much black powder can be fired from a black powder shotgun or rifle. The answer is to stick with suggested powder charges shown in black powder reloading manuals. Somewhere along the line, shooters began to think the black powder gun had no limits as to the size of the powder charge. It's believed that black powder guns build a certain pounds per square inch of pressure and then level off. That's false. Because manuals differ somewhat, the best advice is to follow your manual to the nth degree. Don't overcharge. Most 50-caliber flintlock shooters stay under 110 grains. Never forget that as the powder charge is increased, the barrel pressure also increases, and black powder guns can be blown to smithereens. That's a fact. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

Iowa has been called the "most altered state in the nation," a phrase that refers to the loss of 99.9 percent of its prairie, 90 percent of its wetlands, and more than 80 percent of its forests. Changing farming practices and increased suburban developments have resulted in this loss of wildlife habitat.

Pennsylvania has more than 2.5 million acres of forests certified as "well managed" under the standards set by the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The state forest system accounts for 2.1 million of these acres, making it the largest certified forest in North America.

Between 1984 and 1987, 274 wild turkeys from six states were released at six locations across southern Ontario, Canada. The population is now estimated to be more than 24,000 birds.

Absent from the Buckeye State for nearly a century, snowshoes hares have been reintroduced to the northeast part of the state by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife. The hares have been fitted with toe tags and some with radio collars, allowing biologists to track their movements and survival rates.

The number of waterfowl breeding in Wisconsin increased by 77 percent in 2000 from the previous year. Mallards were the most common duck, with a 2000 population estimated at 367,547 — up 66 percent from 1999 and 160 percent above the 28-year average. The Canada goose population estimate increased 30 percent from 1999 to 102,644.

From 1980 to 1990 hunting participation in America was stable, but from 1990 to 1995 participation decreased eight percent. The 18- to 34-year-old age group had the most significant drop.

In 1999, of the 570 hunters in New Hampshire who received permits, 406 killed moose — a 71 percent success rate.

Hunters took 9,634 deer in Massachusetts in 1999, up from the 9,433 taken in 1998.

Hunters took 643 pronghorn antelope during the 1999 rifle season in North Dakota, enjoying an 85 percent success rate.

The meadowlark is the state bird in Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota and Oregon.

Big game hunting is the most popular (and expensive) type of hunting on national forest lands. In 1996, hunters spent $1.26 billion on big game hunting trips within the national forest system. This represents about 60 percent of expenditures for all types of hunting on forest lands.

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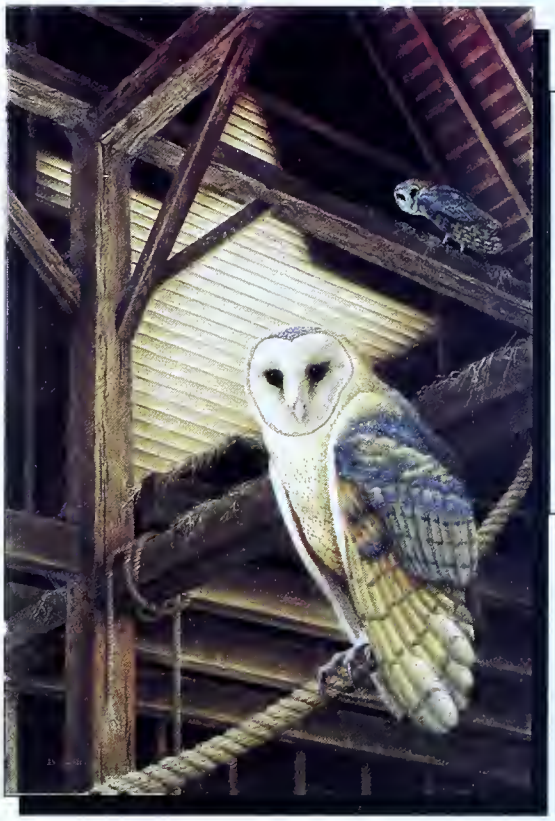
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WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

STAR BARN OWLS, by Barbara Banco, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. Rare birds in Pennsylvania, barn owls are found in the more open areas of the state, where they prey upon rats, mice and other small mammals.



2000

Star Barn Owls

PRINTS are on acid-free, 100 percent rag paper; image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is $125, plus $7.50 s&h (for framing add $97.50, plus $15 s&h). Embroidered, 4-inch patches are $4.71. PA residents add 6% state sales tax; shipping is included.



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Volume 71 ● No. 11
NOVEMBER 2000
(USPS 426180)

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Uniting Sportsmen and Landowners

I WAS RAISED ON A FARM in Cumberland County, an area that is a dream come true for both farmers and sportsmen. Hundreds of acres of precious class I and II soils provide some of the most productive lands for growing crops. For the outdoor enthusiast, there is hiking up to the center-point of the Appalachian Trail, tubing down the Yellow Breeches, or bicycling through the tranquil countryside. And for sportsmen, a multitude of forests and farmlands provides ample hunting opportunities.

During the '70s and '80s when I was growing up, it seemed everyone knew each other, most by first name. Almost everyone farmed, and if they didn't, they had a good size garden. Everyone was connected with the land and depended upon each other to be successful. Family was important, as they were involved in everything from the farming operation to attending church together.

Something else I remember is that nearly everyone hunted and trapped. Almost every farmer had a gun cabinet full of hunting rifles and shotguns passed down from father to son, and an outdoor shed with many traps dangling from rusty nails.

It was amazing how excitement grew throughout the community as the hunting seasons drew near. More exciting for me was seeing the combines in the cornfields; I knew this meant I would soon be walking the corn stubble, hoping to push out a bounty of ringnecks. (At that age I never had much luck harvesting one, though.) And whether I was out in the fields hunting small game or in the woods waiting for that special deer to approach, I was not alone. I was always able to see dots of orange in almost every field on neighboring farms.

Times have changed, though. Not just where I grew up, but all across Pennsylvania. I remain an avid hunter, but many of my friends and relatives do not, and I see fewer and fewer orange dots. On the opening of last year's antlerless deer season — and my father and I hunt on public land — our truck was one of only two vehicles in the lot. When I was 12, we had to get there early just to get a parking spot.

Our farm and the area around it has changed. New homes have increased safety zones and decreased hunting space, and automobile traffic is increasing every day, which is a problem in its own. Many farmers who operated productive farms just 10 years ago now work off the farm. And who can blame them, with agricultural commodity prices at historic lows. The bottom line is that as we lose our farmers and as our hunting ranks decline, we are losing the rural heritage and love for the land that made me and many others into the people we are today.

With the numbers of hunters and farmers both decreasing, it has become difficult for the two groups, who not too long ago were strong allies, to get to know one another. Many farmers across Pennsylvania have told me the same story I have related here. They see fewer and fewer hunters every year, and those they do see don't hunt like they did a decade or two ago. I also talk to many sportsmen who tell me they can't find places to hunt or don't have near the time to hunt as they did growing up. These testimonials reveal a problem that must be overcome: reuniting our farming and sporting communities to preserve our agricultural and hunting heritage.

Many people do not realize that with less hunting comes more problems for the farmer. Deer, geese, woodchuck and turkey populations have all been rising, and with

fewer hunters, agricultural damage has exploded. On average, deer have become one of the most damaging animals to farm products, followed by geese and, in many instances, woodchucks. Turkey and bear damage seem to be increasing, too.

It seems to me that over the last several years farmers have been criticized for complaining about crop damage, and that this has just widened the gap between the farming and sporting communities. Many sportsmen do not understand that farmers rely on hunters to control wildlife, because they do not have the time, money or ability to deal with those problems. And, on the other hand, many farmers sometimes forget that there are many ethical sportsmen who are more than willing to help. If there was a way to bridge this gap, both parties could benefit. And I feel that by bridging this gap, the heritage and tradition of hunting and farming may be invigorated.

For more on Link, visit the agency's web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us., click on the "Hunter Information" icon, then select "Link Program." Link information along with landowner and hunter information forms are on pages 54-56 in the *Hunting and Trapping Digest*, and in the June *Game News*.

Thanks to the Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State Extension Service and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, a program has been developed to help farmers with their crop damage problems and provide sportsmen great places to hunt.

The "Hunter/Trapper Link Program," as it's called, was developed to connect farmers suffering wildlife damage with sportsmen looking for places to hunt. The program serves two fundamental purposes: to open properties to hunters and trappers, and to provide help to landowners with wildlife problems. Overall, Link serves to promote wise and practical use of our wildlife resources.

Landowners who participate in Link are not bound to open their property to public hunting or trapping, nor must they open their property to every hunter or trapper interested in coming there. Furthermore, Link does not require landowners to enter into any long-term agreement.

The program works like this: First a landowner (farmer) fills out a Landowner Information and Property Profile Form and mails it to the Game Commission. The Game Commission then posts the information on the agency website. Hunters, in turn, can review the information and write to those landowners on whose properties they're interested in hunting. Hunters include a data sheet about themselves that informs the landowner why he or she should entrust him to hunt there. The landowner then can review the names and is free to contact those he feels inclined to invite to his property.

It is hoped that Link will help farmers with their crop damage and provide hunters with new opportunities. I believe Link also offers hope in closing the gap between our hunting and farming communities and restoring the sense of togetherness and pride in tradition that the two groups once shared. I encourage all landowners to study this program and give it due consideration. Do not hesitate to contact the Game Commission or Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (510 S. 31st St., Camp Hill, PA 17011) if you are interested or have any questions.

It is time we all work together to keep our hunting and farming heritage alive for our children and their children. This can be done only by a team approach, and I believe Link is the mechanism to unite the team. Please, think Link. — *Michael Pechart, Director of Local Government Affairs, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.*

Pappy Wallhanger

By William F. Summers

IT ALL STARTED on a cold Thanksgiving morning in 1996. My sons, Will and Clay, were already awake, sitting by the fire and quietly talking in anticipation. Wood smoke permeated the senses as I walked down the steps into the dimly lit living room. Darkness still ruled, save for the faint streaks of sunlight glowing from just over the towering Tuscarora Mountain. Everything was quiet. Everything was still. It was my favorite time of day.

For us, Thanksgiving morning is a traditional buck scouting time. For this morning, and also the next few, the boys and I will hit the woods where we hunt, taking note of just about every rub, scrape and paw print within sight of our stands. It's a good way to put the final touches on our heightening anticipation of the upcoming season, not to mention that it also works up a hearty appetite for the holiday feast when we get home.

We normally hunt one of the most remote, least accessible areas of SGL 81. From where we park it's a hike of several miles to our spots. We have to get up early and walk a long way, but there is little hunting pressure, and we never have any trouble seeing our share of whitetails. When we got to our hunting area this time, however, things were a little different. We found a couple decent rubs and a few scrapes, but not as much sign as in past years. When I heard the boys talking about hunting a little lower this year, it crossed my mind, too. We continued looking for deer sign, discussing our options and hunting plans.

It was in the high laurel (the term we use for laurel more than six feet high) that I saw it. I was stunned. In front of me was a young maple tree, 12 inches in diameter, that had been peeled like a carrot. Pieces of shredded bark were piled up around the base and deep gouge marks had been carved into the trunk five feet high. In my 35 years of hunting, I've seen some nice rubs, but I absolutely could not believe what I was looking at now. I called the boys over. Neither one said a word. Clay had the good sense to bring his camcorder, and recorded the sight. The first words said in about three minutes were picked up by the camcorder, "Dad, did you make that?"

"Nope."

"Man, that's gotta be the pappy of all wallhangers."

Pappy Wallhanger was born.

For opening day Clay and Will chose stands in the deep laurel and I opted to watch a small depression on the windy side of the mountain, which had been good to me for the past five years. I shot a decent 8-point, and the boys got skunked, but Will did catch a glimpse of Pappy. It was about 8:30 on an unusually windy, cold and gray opening day. Will noticed movement in the dense laurel in front of him that didn't look natural. Watching closely, he soon spotted a doe that wandered out, cautiously picking her way up the mountain. About every 10 feet she would stop and intently look around as if she were guarding the way



for something. Will eyed her in the scope, and satisfied that she was indeed a doe, he scanned the laurel where she had just come from, hoping to see a buck.

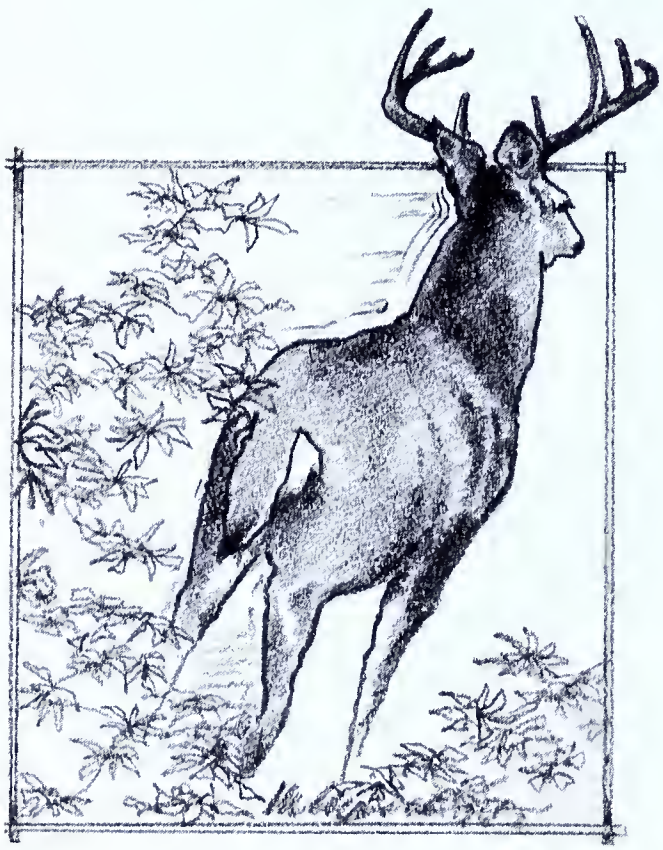
All of a sudden, directly to his right came a loud snort. Will turned just in time to glimpse a super buck as it disappeared into the laurel. White rack, unbelievable spread, at least an 8-point, maybe a 10. It was Pappy, and in an instant he was gone, as if he had never been there. There were no white tails disappearing into the laurel, no crackling of limbs and branches as he made his escape. Not a sound. Pappy seemed to evaporate into the cold, crisp mountain air.

Maybe this was part of his survival tactics. Have the does amble around while he checked the wind to detect any enemies lurking in his territory. If this was his strategy, it worked to perfection. He made a clean getaway.

Sitting tight for the next six hours, Will saw a few does, but Pappy was gone. Not to return, as far as we knew, forever. All he could do was hope that there was no shooting in the general direction where Pappy made his escape. There wasn't. Buck season ended, and as far as we knew, Pappy made it through unscathed.

The 1997 season came around quickly, and we were again back in our old spots. We didn't see any more rubs like the one we had seen in 1996, but there was undeniable evidence that a monster buck still lived in the area. Large, deep scrapes and broken saplings were abundant. A local hunter talked of a giant deer haunting the game lands, but remained quiet on specifics. As remote as it was, we knew there would be at least one other hunter in our territory this year.

The boys chose the same spots as in 1996. Clay got a 3-point in mid-afternoon, and I got a 5-point on the windy side again. Will, who was hoping beyond hope to see this monster again, came home empty. For us, Pappy did not make an appearance in 1997.



The 1998 season finally rolled around and Clay wouldn't be going because of work. Will and I went on our annual scouting trip on Thanksgiving Day. Walking up the dirt road in the cool darkness of the morning, we again found ourselves discussing Pappy. "Do you think he is still up here?"

"I didn't hear of anyone getting a big one around here last year. At least, not that big." "Hope no one shot him out of season." Pappy was the main topic of our conversation that day.

We found fairly good deer sign in our areas: several rubs, nice scrapes, plenty of deer beds. We even jumped about a dozen deer as we made our way around

the mountain top. We checked the front side of the mountain (where Will encountered Pappy in 1996) first, then made our way over to the back side (the windy side). We walked through the laurel, over the rocks, down into the depressions, up the other sides.

And then we saw it. Another large tree had been rubbed the same way as the one back in '96. Peeled white bark shredded into strings. Huge gouge marks. Yes, Pappy was still on the mountain, but it seemed he had taken up residence on the windy side.



Not surprisingly, Will changed his plan of attack and decided to hunt a very small but high patch of laurel bordering a large area of exposed rock on the back side of the mountain. I wasn't particularly fond of the location, but kept my thoughts to myself.

Temperatures for opening day were forecasted to be in the mid-60s — hardly deer season weather in Pennsylvania — and we decided to leave at 3:30 a.m. We wanted to take our good old time getting to our deer stands without getting overheated. Again we walked up the same dirt road that we had been traveling for years. There was no wind; everything was perfectly still. The silence was incredible. The day had not yet begun to break and starlight filled the morning sky. As we neared the top of the mountain, I saw the brightest falling star I have ever seen. Everything seemed perfect. I had a feeling this was going to be one fine deer season.

We hit our separation point and Will went down to his stand, I to mine. Even as the day began to brighten, the wind remained calm. It was eerie. I couldn't remember a time when there was not at least a small breeze on the backside of that mountain. But there was no wind at all. Could this be the edge we were looking for?

Will got to his stand and sat down. Still in semi-darkness, he heard the rustling of leaves in the vast woods below him. The rustling kept on and on, minute after minute, getting louder and louder, until he could start to make out shapes of deer. The day was now starting to brighten, and he could not only make out that they were deer, but see that they were all does, just milling around, slowly picking their way toward the top. There was one small problem: They were headed right for his deer stand.

Finally they stopped, 15 feet away, still oblivious to Will's presence. He wisely covered his face with his hand and patiently sat rock-still for 25 minutes. One of the does stared directly at him, knowing he looked suspicious, but unable to tell if he was a threat. She bobbed her head and stomped her foot, trying to get a reaction, but Will didn't move. Soon, she gave up and meandered to the top with the rest of her friends, and before long they were in the high laurel behind him. He could hear them from time to time over the next hour, but they never scented him.

Then, about 8:30, it happened. A lone deer was moving around in the laurel, possibly heading Will's way. But the laurel was so dense from where the sound was coming from, Will had to stand up to see. The noise stopped.

Postscript from Will Summers, Jr.

Although my dad wrote every word of "Pappy Wallhanger," he asked me to type it and send it in because he doesn't have a computer. And, I don't think he is a very good typist. But I do know he is the best hunter I have ever seen. Everything I know about hunting I learned from him. Had it not been for him taking time to show me how to hunt, what to do, where to go, what to look for, the two weeks after Thanksgiving would be just that, the two weeks after Thanksgiving. Instead, it's buck season. More important is that my dad is also the best dad in the world. Whether or not Pappy Wallhanger came home last year. Whether or not a Pappy Wallhanger ever comes home again. Whether or not we ever even see another Pappy Wallhanger. My dad is still the best, and I'm just happy we can hunt together.

Then it started again.

Realizing he couldn't see any better in that direction from a standing position, Will slowly sat back down. To his left, a branch snapped. He looked. What he saw made his heart skip a beat. A huge, white rack was slowly emerging from the laurel. Will's rifle came up to the ready position as the head of a monster buck materialized out of the laurel about 25 yards to his left. Then, just as suddenly, it was gone. Pappy had disappeared again. There was no noise, no movement.

Will stayed at the ready, even though his heart was rapidly sinking. Then, just as suddenly, the huge buck completely emerged from the laurel and trotted directly at Will, following the edge line between the rock and the laurel.

Just as Will had not seen Pappy until it was too late only two years before, now Pappy did not see Will. And when it was over, the Monarch of the Mountain, Pappy Wallhanger, lay still a mere 20 feet away.

This huge buck had been in our dreams for three seasons, and now he would become part of us forever. We thanked him for his life, and as if on cue, the wind picked up.

Pappy's white rack is perfectly symmetrical, with eight even points and a ninth point four inches from the end of the left antler. Its outside spread measures 20¾ inches and the rack has 4-inch brow tines.

My dad never hunted, but hunting was always part of my life. And although I have taken many nice bucks, none are close to Pappy Wallhanger. Even though it was my son who got the big one, I feel like my life of hunting is now complete. □

DAYS OF YORE



THE UFFELMAN brothers, Left to right, JOHN, HENRY, DICK and CHARLES, with their take in two days of hunting in 1911 in Hanover Township, Beaver County. Note the ringnecks in the background.

The 2001 Working Together for Wildlife feature is . . .

The Coyote

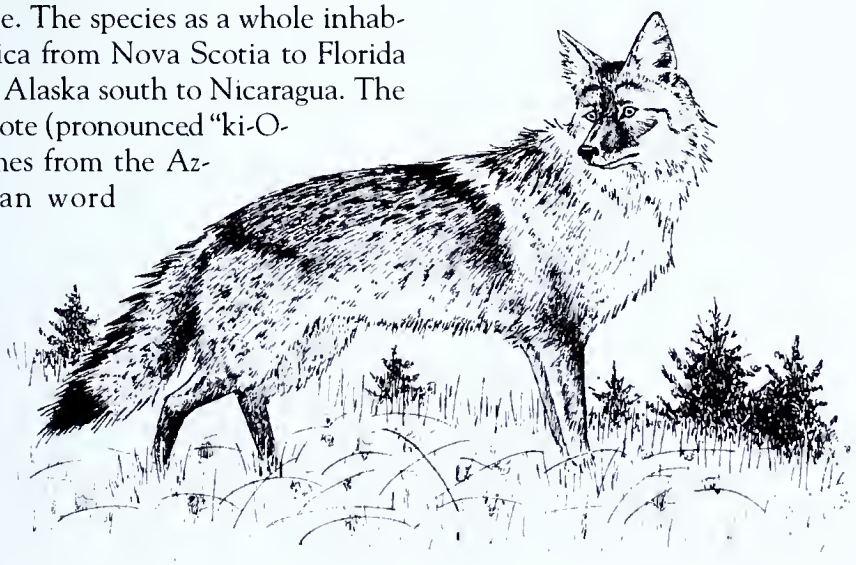
By Chuck Fergus

ON A SUMMER NIGHT in 1995, while tenting along Rock Run in Centre County, I awoke to a haunting sound: a string of shrill yips followed by drawn-out, mournful wails. I woke my son, and we lay in our sleeping bags listening as the wild chorus echoed through the wooded valley. I had often heard coyotes howling in western states, but this was the first I'd heard them in Pennsylvania.

The coyote is not listed as a resident species in *Mammals of Pennsylvania,* by J. Kenneth Doutt, published in 1966, although the first coyotes had entered our state by then. It is thought that *Canis latrans* moved into northern and eastern Pennsylvania from New York's Catskill Mountains in the 1960s; from there, coyotes spread south and west across the state, perhaps augmented by individuals migrating east from Ohio. The subspecies found in Pennsylvania and throughout the Northeast is *Canis latrans latrans*, the eastern coyote. The species as a whole inhabits America from Nova Scotia to Florida and from Alaska south to Nicaragua. The name coyote (pronounced "ki-O-tee") comes from the Aztec Indian word *coyotl;* coyotes are also called brush wolves. *Canis latrans* probably originated in the plains and deserts of North America, from where it has expanded its range, filling niches left vacant when humans exterminated larger and less adaptable predators such as mountain lions and gray wolves.

Biology

DNA studies show that the coyote interbred with the gray wolf in Canada during its eastward expansion. This hybridization accounts for the larger size of the eastern coyote, compared to its western counterpart. In Pennsylvania, adult coyotes are 48 to 60 inches long, including a 12- to 16-inch tail. Weights range from 35 to more than 60 pounds, with males larger and heavier than females.



This month's cover features "The Watcher," by Marie Girio Brummett. This is the 2001 Working Together for Wildife fine art print. As in past years, a limited edition of 600 fine art prints is available. Prints are on acid-free, 100 percent rag paper; image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is $125, plus $7.50 s&h (for framing add $97.50, plus $15 s&h). PA residents add 6% state sales tax..

Coyotes look like slim German shepherds, with pointed, erect ears and a long, slender nose. A coyote carries its bushy tail held low, near or between its back legs. The fur is course, dense and long; the basically tan coat is sprinkled with rusty brown, black and gray. Some coyotes are pale in color, while others are dark. In most, a dark stripe runs down the back, and dark fur marks the front of each foreleg. The tip of the tail is black.

In the Northeast, coyotes live singly, in pairs, or in packs of three to eight. The usual grouping consists of two adults and some of their offspring, and subadults six to eighteen months old that have not yet dispersed to find territories of their own. Adult males and females pair in a monogamous union for one to several years, sometimes for life.

Coyotes spend their days resting in brushy areas and mountain laurel thickets. They are crepuscular and nocturnal, and their activity peaks at dawn and dusk, although in areas where few humans live, they may become more active during the day. Extremely alert and cautious, coyotes are informed by their keen senses of smell, eyesight and hearing. They swim capably, run at 25 to 35 miles per hour, and jump with great agility. They use a variety of yips, barks and howls to communicate with each other, and they mark out territories by sprinkling their strongly scented urine on bushes and stumps, and by leaving feces in prominent places. An individual's home range may encompass one to ten square miles. Coyotes in packs defend home territories; lone coyotes and pairs probably do not defend a home range.

More than 90 percent of a coyote's diet is flesh, animals caught and killed or found as carrion: small rodents, rabbits, snowshoe hares, muskrats, woodchucks, deer, domestic dogs and cats, livestock, birds, snakes, frogs, turtles, fish, crayfish and insects. When coyotes hunt small animals, they creep up quietly, pause while determining the prey's exact location, and pounce. Coyotes kill deer a lot less frequently than they take small rodents. On larger prey, two or more coyotes may chase an animal in relays and finally kill it by biting the neck or throat, severing the jugular vein or causing suffocation. They bury any surplus food and mark the cache with urine. Coyotes wade into marshes to take waterfowl, and they eat fruits and berries in season.

A study of 300 coyote scats in Pennsylvania found deer to be the dominant food, showing up in 57 percent of droppings. While coyotes may have trouble killing adult deer, they more easily prey on fawns, and they find roadkilled deer in abundance. The Pennsylvania study uncovered no evidence of predation on livestock, but coyotes do occasionally kill sheep, goats and poultry. The droppings included remains of many small mammals, particularly mice and voles, followed in frequency by rabbits and woodchucks. Insect remains showed up in 18 percent of scats, birds remains in 10 percent; half of the droppings contained plant matter.

Female coyotes have one heat, or estrus, per year. In Pennsylvania, this usually occurs in February. The gestation period is 58 to 63 days. In April or May, the female seeks out a natal den, often on a brushy south-facing slope; she may enlarge a woodchuck, skunk or fox burrow or choose a hollow log, a hole under a stump or a fallen

tree, or a crevice among rocks. Dens are a foot in diameter and up to 20 feet long. The female bears four to eight pups; the average is six. The pups' eyes are closed, and they weigh about nine ounces and are covered with woolly gray-brown fur. The male — and sometimes other members of the pack — bring food to the nursing female. The pups' eyes open after two weeks. In another week, they begin venturing out of the den. Both parents feed them, finding prey away from the den, chewing and swallowing the meat, and regurgitating it for the young. The pups are weaned at nine weeks. The family leaves the den, and the parents teach their offspring to hunt.

Young coyotes begin to leave the family group in early fall, when they are around six months old. Juveniles disperse 30 to 50 miles, with males traveling farther than females; some go as far as 100 miles. They achieve full size and weight by around nine months. Normally females do not breed until their second winter. Maximum life span in the wild is 10 to 12 years; in captivity, coyotes have lived 18 years.

I am told by other Pennsylvanians that more and more frequently they hear coyotes howling, both at night and during the day. Not long ago, I heard coyotes yipping within a few hundred yards of my house; a siren on the highway a few miles away apparently set them off.

One can go looking for coyote tracks in the snow. A coyote's paw measures about 2.75 inches long and 2.5 inches wide. Coyote tracks are similar to those of dogs, but dogs' tracks are usually offset on each side, and coyote tracks are in a straight line.

Habitat

Prime habitat is brushy land with high numbers of rodents, rabbits and deer. Coyotes also prosper along the edges where wooded areas meet agricultural land. They inhabit deep woods, marshes and farmland. They have colonized the margins of many cities, including Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Erie.

Many readers will be glad to learn that this feature came from Chuck Fergus's new book, *Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast*. Chuck wrote the popular "Thornapples" column in *Game News* from 1978 though 1992 and has contributed many other fine features to this and other magazines. He has also written the agency's ongoing "Wildlife Note" series. In *Wildlife of Pennsylvania*, Chuck blends solid scientific information on the Keystone State's diverse animal life — from black bears to timber rattlesnakes — with his own field observations and anecdotes. Hunters, naturalists and all others interested in wildlife will enjoy this 438-page volume, with pen-and-ink illustrations by Michigan artist Amelia Hansen.

Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast may be ordered from the Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. The cost is $19.95, and PA residents must add $1.20 state sales tax.

Population

The coyote population in Pennsylvania has grown rapidly since *Canis latrans* expanded its range into the state in the 1960s. An estimated 7,000 to 8,000 coyotes are killed by hunters and trappers in Pennsylvania each year, perhaps a quarter of the population. Coyotes are found throughout the state, with the largest concentrations in the northern and northeastern counties. Some biologists believe that high concentrations of coyotes suppress red fox populations.

Elsewhere in America, particularly in the West, coyotes are controlled through poisoning, trapping, shooting from aircraft, and destroying the young in the den. Where coyotes are persecuted heavily, they respond by producing larger litters. □

1999 Turkey Harvests

By Mary Jo Casalena
PGC Wildlife Biologist

RESULTS of the 1999 Game Take Survey show the spring 1999 harvest was 37,800 gobblers, and the fall harvest was 40,700 turkeys, for a total harvest of 78,500. The spring '99 harvest was a record, surpassing the 36,400 taken in 1995. Our fall harvest was the second highest, and only the second time we went over 40,000. The record fall harvest was 49,700, also set in 1995.

Preliminary spring 2000 harvest figures from report cards show an approximate harvest of 36,290 gobblers, which would make it our third best spring ever; final 2000 harvest figures will be available next fall.

Since 1995, our turkey harvests have been robust, indicating a continuing increase in the statewide turkey population. Turkey Management Areas 7B and 9A, however, continue to show low harvest densities, indicating that turkey populations in these areas may no longer be expanding. (Note: We are currently conducting an intensive radio-telemetry study of the turkey population in TMA 7B to determine the causes of this low turkey population).

Statewide, during the spring '99 season, hunters harvested an average of 1.4 gobblers per forested square mile. As in past years, harvest densities were highest in western and southeastern Turkey Management Areas. The high was in TMA 1A, with an average of 5 gobblers taken per

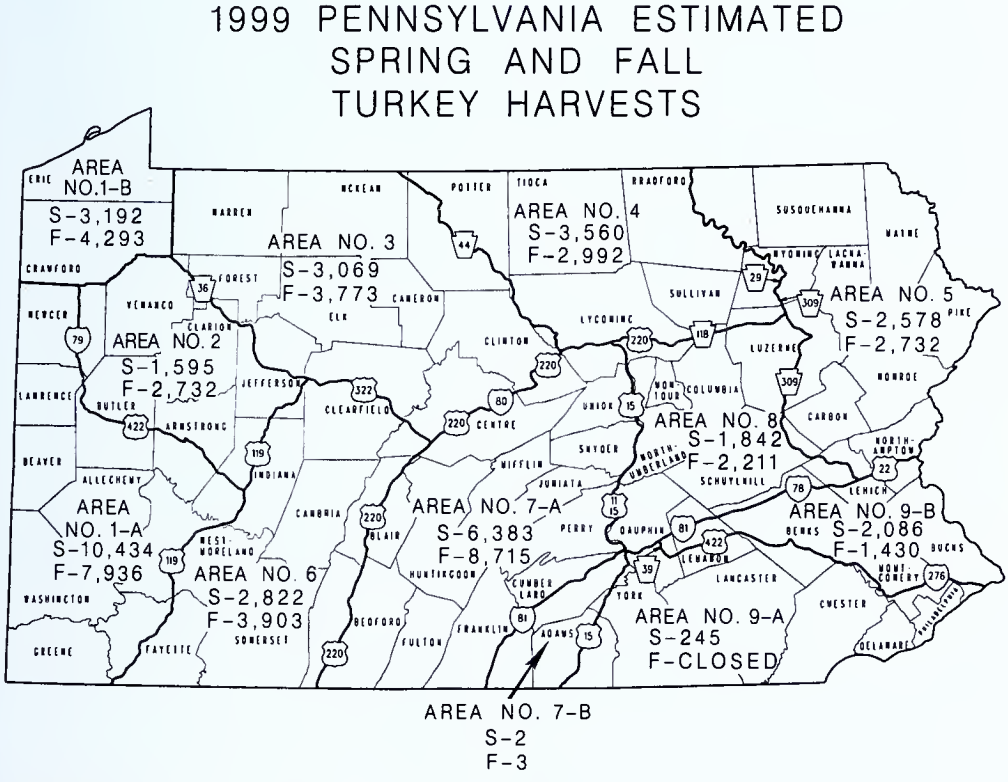
Spring 1999 wild turkey harvest by Turkey Management Areas (Calculated from Game Take Survey)

TMA	Spring Harvest	Spring % of State Harvest	Hunter Success	Harvest per Forested Sq. Mile
1A	10,434	28	22%	4.92
1B	3,192	8	17%	3.73
2	1,595	4	10%	.97
3	3,069	8	11%	.60
4	3,560	9	20%	1.16
5	2,578	7	19%	.78
6	2,822	7	12%	.93
7A	6,383	17	13%	1.64
7B	2	0	13%	.01
8	1,842	5	13%	1.10
9A	245	1	15%	.31
9B	2,086	6	23%	4.47
Total	37,808	100	16%	1.44

Fall 1999 wild turkey harvest by Turkey Management Areas (Calculated from Game Take Survey)

TMA	Fall Harvest	Fall % of State Harvest	Hunter Success	Harvest per Forested Sq. Mile
1A	7,936	19	23%	3.74
1B	4,293	11	31%	5.01
2	2,732	7	16%	1.66
3	3,773	9	10%	.74
4	2,992	7	14%	.98
5	2,732	7	22%	.82
6	3,903	10	15%	1.28
7A	8,715	21	13%	2.24
7B	3	0	11%	.01
8	2,211	5	20%	1.32
9A	0	0	0	0
9B	1,430	4	41%	3.06
Total	40,721	100	17%	1.55

forested square mile, accounting for 28 percent of the statewide harvest. TMA 9B in southeastern Pennsylvania showed the second best harvest density, with 4.5 birds harvested per forested square mile. Because TMA 9B is the second smallest turkey management area (only 470 forested square miles, much of which is private property), it accounted for only 4 percent of the statewide harvest. Third highest harvest density occurred in TMA 1B, with 3.7 gobblers taken.



Interestingly, these three management areas also showed the highest hunter densities; 19 to 22 hunters per forested square mile, whereas the statewide average is 9 hunters per forested square mile. Conversely, TMA 7B and TMA 9A (which is adjacent to TMA 9B) had the lowest harvest densities, with less than 0.1 and 0.3 gobblers, respectively.

Preliminary harvest densities for spring 2000 again show TMA 9B and 1A as the hot areas, with about 4.5 birds harvested per forested square mile. TMA 1B was third best with about 4 birds.

As for hunter success rates in 1999, they were highest in the TMAs with high harvest densities. TMA 9B and 1A led the state with 23 percent and 22 percent of the hunters taking gobblers, respectively. TMAs 4 and 5 also showed high hunter success rates with 20 percent and 19 percent of the hunters in these northcentral and northeastern counties, respectively, connecting on gobblers. Hunters in TMA 1B were successful 17 percent of the time. On average, 16 percent of spring 1999 turkey hunters brought home gobblers.

Typically, hunter success is higher in the fall, when turkeys are in flocks and either sex is legal. This held true in TMA 9B, where 41 percent of the hunters harvested turkeys. TMAs 1B and 1A also showed high hunter success with 31 percent and 23 percent, respectively. Hunters in TMAs 5 and 8 were successful as well, with 22 percent and 20 percent success rates. On the other hand, TMAs with the lowest hunter success rates were TMA 7B (less than 1 percent success), TMA 4 (14 percent success), and TMA 7A (13 percent). The statewide average fall success rate was 17 percent.

On average, fall turkey hunters harvested 1.6 turkeys per forested square mile. Again, TMAs 1A and 1B showed the highest harvest densities of 5 and 3.7 birds per forested square mile, respectively, with TMA 9B close behind at 3 birds.

Some, but not all, of this increased harvest can be attributed to the increase in fall season length from 7 days to 2 weeks in TMAs 1A and 1B. Also, the season in TMA 9B was lengthened to include one Saturday in 1999.

Fall harvest density on TMA 7A in our central counties was a solid 2.2 birds. However, because TMA 7A had the highest hunter density (17 hunters per forested square mile), hunter success was only 13 percent. Hunter densities in TMA 1A and 1B also were substantial with more than 16 hunters per forested square mile, but did not impact hunter success rates. Statewide, fall hunter density was 9.3. Over 244,600 hunters participated in the fall 1999 turkey hunting season, and 238,000 participated in the 1999 gobbler season.

Across North America, the wild turkey harvest for fall 1998 was 175,500 and spring 1999 was 563,700 turkeys. These include harvests of all five wild subspecies. Alabama yielded the highest spring harvest and Pennsylvania laid claim to the highest fall harvest (33,630). Harvests across North America have increased 113 percent since 1985. During 1998-99, the total number of spring turkey hunters was 1,805,500 with Pennsylvania accounting for the most hunters (237,980). The number of fall hunters was 855,300. Spring seasons are now open in 49 states plus Ontario, Canada, and 40 states have fall seasons. Even though, nationally, the number of hunters has been decreasing, the number of turkey hunters has been increasing. □



KRISTY MOYER, left, with her friend LISA SCHMIT and her 118-pound bear taken in Lycoming County in 1998. Not only was it her first bear, but it was her first game since she began hunting. What a way to start a hunting career.

Daddy's Pride and Joy

By *Kristy Moyer* & Michael W. Schmit

IT WAS HALFTIME of my daughter Lisa's soccer game when I noticed her friend Kristy walking toward me. Bear season was about two months away and Lisa would again forego bear camp because she didn't want to be the only girl there. It was her junior year in high school and time was running out before she'd be heading off to college.

Like Lisa, Kristy enjoys hunting, and it suddenly occurred to me that Kristy might want to go along. Perhaps with the two of them providing each other moral support, they'd decide to go. The invitation I was about to make would lead to one of life's irreplaceable moments.

Bear camp has always been a great time for the guys of our family. Our sons Steve and Jeff, my brother Dave, father Irv and friends Dale, Brendan, Toby, Doyle and Archer. But like so many camps, there were no girls. Not that we had anything against females in camp; they just never showed any interest. But that all changed in the fall of '97 in that chance encounter

with Kristy at the soccer game.

"Kristy," I said to get her attention. "Do you want to go bear hunting with us? Lisa doesn't want to be the only girl in camp, but she'd go if you went along." The look on her face said everything. The girls were going bear hunting.

Working for the Game Commission has provided me little time to go to camp for the firearm deer season. For this reason, bear season has always been my favorite hunting trip of the year, a time to fill our camp with kids, not only ours but their friends as well. As long as grades were good — and they always were — our kids have always been allowed two days off from school for bear camp, and they're always encouraged to take a friend. Nothing compares to the memories of a camp full of youthful enthusiasm and imagination.

Since acquiring our Lycoming County camp in January of 1991, we've not missed a single bear season. Memories now include the deer we struck with the van on our way back from dinner in '94, the bear I took in '95, the two bears that left their tracks in our tracks in the freshly fallen snow of '96, the bear in the cornfield next to camp the night before the '97 season and, of course, Kristy's bear hunt in '98.

But this is Kristy's story. To share with you the excitement of a 17-year-old lady who jumped at the chance to go bear hunting with her friend and the "guys," and who beat the odds when she killed a bear, the first game she'd ever taken. It's best told in her own words.

The most exciting thing to happen to me in the past 10 years occurred when I was invited to hunt bear with my friend Lisa at her family's hunting camp. One minute I'm walking to my seat at a high school soccer game and the next I'm confronted with an invitation to go bear hunting. Once home, it didn't take me long to ask my parents for the permission I knew they'd give. A phone call to Lisa and it was confirmed. We were going bear hunting. I didn't know it at the time, but these events led to my taking Pennsylvania's toughest of trophies, a black bear.

The guys at camp welcomed Lisa and Kristy with open arms and an attitude of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity to cook, clean, wash dishes and even share in the nighttime games (scrabble, pinochle, etc.) that is. We hunted hard for two days from sunup to sundown. The girls made their way up and over some of the steepest hillsides in Lycoming County and braved extreme cold the first morning and a blowing snow that left visibility next to nothing at times. Their first year didn't result in any bear encounters, but they had a great time, and before we broke camp on the morning of the third day they were already talking about next year.



CAMP members DALE FINK, second from left, BRENDAN FINK, and STEVE SCHMIT, right, tied KRISTY'S bear to a pole to get it out of the woods.

The year passed quickly, and like thousands of others, we traveled to camp on Sunday morning, the day before the 1998 bear season. Hunting camp is the culmination of innumerable little experiences that make up the whole. These include planning the grocery list, the shopping trip to fill the order, sighting-in the rifles, packing the car, the "trip to camp," arrival, making the bunks, scouting, cards, jokes, laughs and more food than anyone deserves to indulge in. A ritual fit for kings — and queens. Kristy's story bypasses all the preliminary stuff and gets right to the big day.

My adventure began Monday morning, November 23, 1998. It was the first day of bear season, and I was near English Center in Lycoming County, hunting with my good friend, Lisa, and her father, Mike. Lisa and I were both excited, this being only our second year of bear hunting. I was 17 and had been hunting for five years, but hadn't yet taken any game.

Everyone was awakened at 4 a.m. to the smell of bacon, as Lisa's dad prepared breakfast: Bacon, eggs, toast, juice and coffee seemed the perfect way to start the day. Everyone downed breakfast quickly and began making last-minute checks of backpack contents. I made sure I had my flashlight, knife, compass, rope, lunch, matches and cartridges. Everything seemed in order, and it was soon time to load into the car and head for our spot.

After a short drive we arrived at our destination, and within minutes were hiking up the mountain in search of the large rock outcropping where we intended to hunt the first few hours. It took about 30 minutes to get there. Before long darkness gave way to shadows and soon shadows took on clearer definition. Breaking daylight is a great time to be in the woods. Turkeys could be heard in front of us, but we never got a glimpse.

By 9:15 Lisa and I were cold and ready to move, so Lisa's dad suggested we climb the remainder of the way to the top and sneak partway down into the next hollow. It was about 9:40 when we reached the spot where I was told to stay. Mike told me that I'd be sitting within 100 yards of where he had taken a bear in 1995.

I sat about 100 yards from the top of Bear Run. Lisa and Mike continued farther down the mountain, with Lisa sitting about 100 yards straight down from me and Mike continuing down the mountain from there. I was sitting at the base of an old rotted tree stump and watched for movement along a row of hemlocks to my left.

It was 9:50 and I was getting anxious, hoping to have an encounter with a bear. Five minutes later I heard a noise. It must be a deer, I thought, but nothing appeared. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, I saw something black coming up the mountain. I was excited but still didn't know what it was. Then it appeared about 75 yards away, running up the side of the mountain. It was a bear!

As it quartered up the mountain in my direction I looked for an opening where I could get an open shot. I settled my scope on a small opening and waited. The bear stepped into view and the crosshairs seemed to settle in place. Kaboom. *At first I thought I had missed because the bear kept running up the mountain directly above me. All of a sudden it started rolling down the mountain in my direction. To say I was nervous would be an understatement.*

The bear stopped rolling about 50 yards to my right, got up and started running right at me. I didn't know what to think. At 20 yards it angled downhill and was about to cross directly between Lisa and me. At this point the bear couldn't have been more than 10 yards in front of me. Lisa noticed what was taking place and moved quickly to a point where I'd have a safe shot in which to finish off the bear. It fell about 11 yards in front of me, dropping instantly on the second shot.

I was shaking like a leaf and didn't know what to do or think. Lisa started yelling because she was so happy that I

had gotten a bear. I can't imagine how silly we must have looked, jumping around and giving "high fives."

After dropping off Kristy and Lisa at their stands I slipped down the mountain to get out of their way. I had no more than gotten settled in at the base of a large tree when a rifle shot broke the silence. I knew it had to have been either Kristy or Lisa. Moments later another shot rang out, followed by the wildest whooping and hollering imaginable. The celebrating I heard from above told me all I needed to know: One of the girls had a bear.

As I made my way back up the mountain I could see the two of them gathered around what I knew had to be a bear. The excitement on their faces was priceless. After offering all the appropriate handshakes, hugs and congratulations, we thought about how to get the bear back to the vehicle.

Then came the fun part, getting it out of the woods. Our options were to take it downhill to the bottom of Bear Run and carry it two miles to the nearest gate, or work our way to the top and down the other side. We decided on the latter.

After making sure the bear was tagged, Lisa, Mike and I got a stout 10-foot pole to tie it onto. That way we'd not damage the hide by dragging it out of the woods. With the mountain steep enough to make walking a challenge, the three of us struggled to carry the bear up the mountain. Lisa and I had the front and Mike supported the back as we inched our way to the top. As luck would have it, we saw another hunter from our party. He was only too happy to assist, so Brendan and Mike carried the bear to the top while Lisa and I carried everyones' equipment.

When we finally reached the top, most of the remainder of our party came together to admire my trophy. After a well-deserved rest and plenty of photos we set out down the other side to the truck. It took four hours from the time I shot my bear until we had it loaded into the truck. By the time we reached camp, we were all exhausted, and all I could think about was that I'm 17 and I just harvested a bear. I couldn't wait to call home.

A trip to the Jersey Shore check station is an annual ritual for our gang, but who'd have thought we'd actually be taking a bear. Certainly not me. My bear was a female that weighed 118 pounds field-dressed, and I later learned it was two years old.

When the Game Commission staff were done weighing the bear, I immediately went to call my mom at home. When I told her I had shot a bear she couldn't believe it. She hurriedly called the farmer near my dad's cabin in Sullivan County and asked if he could get word to my dad.

I stayed in camp the next day, rather than go out with the rest of the hunters, and about one in the afternoon I heard a knock at the cabin door. It was my dad and his friend. They had come to see my trophy. As we gathered around my bear I could see in his face that he was very proud of me. He has been hunting for 34 years and has yet to get a bear, so I think he was a little jealous, too. He now knows that his "little girl" took a trophy that few Pennsylvania hunters will ever be fortunate enough to take. And I'm hooked on hunting for life.

The 1999 season marked the girl's third year in camp, and although we didn't see any bears, we thoroughly enjoyed our days afield. Kristy and her dad decided to have a full mount done of her bear, and it's proudly displayed in their family room.

Both Lisa and Kristy graduated from high school, leaving the question unanswered as to whether or not they'll have time to return to bear camp this fall for another try. What I do know is this: If you introduce kids to hunting by providing them with positive values and experiences, you'll have created a sportsman for life; or should I say sportswoman. □



It is circumstance and proper timing that give an action its character and make it either good or bad.

— Agesilaus 444-400 BC

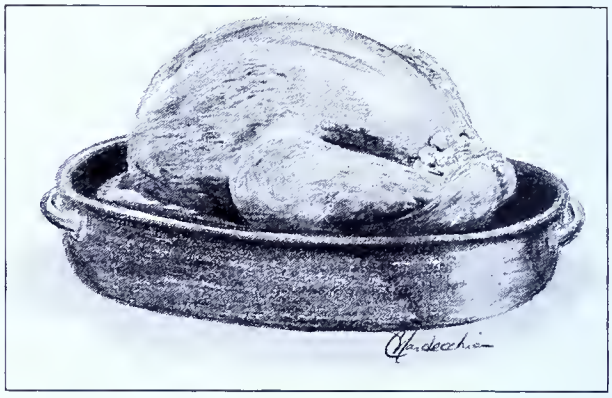
Poachers at Oak Hill

By William Wasserman
Wyoming County WCO

WHEN FRED and Levi saw the turkeys, Fred made a quick left and pulled up the dirt lane. Within seconds, they were close enough to shoot. Fred eased himself out of the driver's seat, leaned his rifle over the fender and squeezed off a round. Levi swung open the passenger door and was running across the field before the wounded bird knew what hit it. He snatched the struggling turkey and hightailed back to the pickup, tossing it into the tool chest attached to the bed. Fred hit the accelerator and they were on their way.

The dirt lane they were on, however, turned out to be a driveway, and a house right in front of them blocked their intended

getaway. Sometimes the best laid plans just don't work out, Fred figured as he turned his truck around in the narrow driveway. After three tries he was finally on his way.



It was 5 p.m. on my day off, and a mere 30 minutes earlier my wife and I had been kicking back, celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary. Poachers always seem to pick the most inopportune times to commit their crimes, I thought while driving toward Mehoopany, and this Valentine's Day was no exception.

Even with a good lead on who the culprits were, I wondered how I was going to make out with my investigation, considering the violation had occurred over an hour earlier. By now, both poachers would probably be secure in their homes, and a search warrant could be difficult if not impossible to obtain. Perhaps I'd luck out and they'd invite me in for dinner, I chuckled to myself as I approached my rendezvous with Deputy Gene Gaydos.

I had called Gene earlier and asked him to meet me, and he was parked nearby as I turned onto a dirt road leading to Levi's home. "Bill," he radioed. "A truck matching the description of the one we're looking for just flew by me."

"Ten-four," I responded. "It just went by me, too. I'm going to stop him."

Gene was pulling out of his parking place as I made a U-turn and hit my redlights. The truck immediately came to a stop. I exited my vehicle and Gene backed me up.

Fred got out of his truck on my command, and I asked him about the turkey. At first, he played dumb. "What turkey?" he exclaimed with wide, startled eyes that feigned surprise. But when I told him I could see blood on his toolbox, he glanced back at his pickup, dropped his shoulders and stared at the ground.

"Okay. You got me," he said.

Fred took a plastic trash bag from the bed of his truck and placed it at my feet. Inside were the feathers and remains of a turkey. "Where's the rest of it?" I asked.

"Ah, I guess it's still in Levi's oven." Fred replied.

"Will you take me there?" I asked.

Within minutes, Deputy Gaydos and I were pulling into Levi's driveway, right behind Fred. Levi spotted us and walked out into the freezing cold wearing only jeans and a T-shirt. His hands were stuffed into his pockets. "'Sup?" he said, as if the sight of two WCOs escorting his buddy an hour after they'd illegally killed a turkey meant nothing to him.

"I think you know what's up," I said.

Levi stared at me blankly, so I paused and stared back for a bit. Then, after identifying myself, I continued. "I have information that you and Fred killed a turkey and stuffed it in the toolbox of Fred's pickup. I also know the bird is in your oven right now. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Levi eyed Fred briefly, then looked straight at me. "Okay," he said. "You're right, c'mon in." As we followed him through the front door, he glanced over his shoulder at us. "Want something to eat?"

"No, thanks," I replied. "But something sure smells good."

"It's the bacon strips. Really adds to the flavor. Are you gonna take the turkey?"

"I'm afraid so. It's contraband."

"Are you gonna eat it?"

"No," I said. "Illegal game always sticks in my throat. Can't quite get it down. But we'll give it to a needy family. Okay with you?"

Levi bent over the oven and pulled out the turkey. It was in a tin pan wrapped in foil. A half dozen biscuits lined the edge of the oven, ready to be popped in at a moment's notice. He carried the pan as gingerly as a newborn baby and set it softly on the counter. "Bummer, man. I was looking forward to a turkey dinner. Anyway, it's been in for 45 minutes. Two hours and 15 to go for whoever gets it."

"I'll keep that in mind," I said. "Now, can we sit down? I have some paperwork that needs to be taken care of."

As we sat at the dining room table, Levi signed a consent search form and gave me a written confession. "No sense in lying about it," he said. "I'm man enough to admit I did it. It was a big one too. Biggest turkey I ever saw."

As Gene and I listened to Levi and Fred give us the details, the front door opened and a woman walked in.

"Oh, hi, Honey," exclaimed Levi. "Have a little business to take care of. Done in a jif."

The woman eyed us suspiciously for a moment and walked into the kitchen. "What's this on the counter?" she called, while peeking at the alleged trophy-size bird.

"That's evidence, ma'am," I said from the dining room table. "Please don't touch it."

"It was gonna be dinner," added Levi. "Things sure have changed in a hurry."

"Hmm, looks like a grouse," the woman responded.

Levi looked at Gene and me with a sheepish grin, and shook his head in bewilderment. "It was a lot bigger before the oven got to it," he mumbled.

"Guess so." I shrugged. "Now let me explain how these citations work."

Later that week, Levi and Fred went before the district justice and each pled guilty and received a $200 fine. At that rate, plus the $35 in court costs, a 20-pound turkey would have cost them $23.50 per pound. The way I figure, they should have gone to the grocery store for their bird. It would have cost a lot less; they would have been able to actually eat it; and they'd still be allowed to hunt next year. What a deal. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

The Complete Book of Woodcock Hunting by Frank Woolner, The Lyons Press, 123 West 18 Street, New York, NY 10011, 168 pp., $24.95 plus $4 shipping & handling. Frank Woolner was one of America's most respected outdoorsmen, and this publication, first published in 1974, is one of the most definitive books ever written about these gamebirds. Woolner offers a history of woodcock hunting, from early 1800s to 1974. Hundreds of photos grace the pages, and there are tips for preparing bird dogs, selecting the proper gear, finding ideal habitat, and choosing the best strategy for hunting these birds.

Sweet Music

By Eric A. Hasel

I FEEL BAD for people in this day and age who, as children, never learned to hunt and fish, or to simply appreciate time outdoors with loved and respected elders. For me few, if any, memories are as vivid as those of times spent outdoors with family and friends. One of my favorite boyhood memories is accompanying relatives on my first hunt. This day stands out in my mind because, even though I was too young to carry a gun, it was the day I came to realize that deep within me lies a hunter.

I won't try to describe what makes a hunter; those who aren't will never truly understand. I will say, however, that that particular day comes to mind every time I step into a field or woods in pursuit of game. It's the sounds, sights and feelings that became part of my fabric on that day long ago that anyone who loves the outdoors can relate to.

It was still dark when my dad woke up my cousin Chad and me. We had been sleeping in Uncle Charlie's boyhood room in my grandparent's home. Groggy, but eager, we headed downstairs where Pap and Gram were frying eggs, sausage and ham, and Uncle Jerry was already eating. Cousin Donnie joined us at about the same time, as he had run down from his mother's trailer up the road. We were eating and talking in anticipation of the day's hunt when Uncle Charlie came in through the back door and served himself a plate of food and cup of coffee. After eating, Chad and I headed into the den to retrieve Pap's 12-gauge Ithaca, and then Pap outfitted us with various orange hunting caps and jackets from hooks along the cellar stairs.

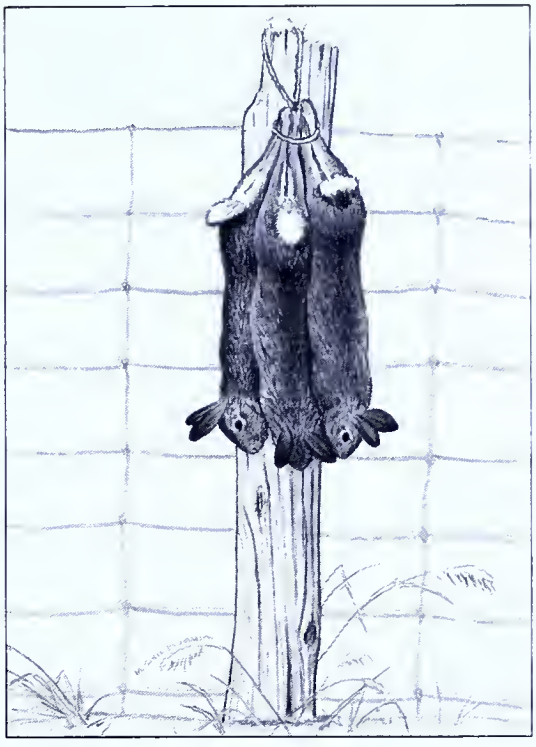
We loaded gear in the three pickups in the street out front, and then drove around back to pick up the rest of our party: Lead, Rya and Fanny. The three little beagles began their chorus as soon as they spotted us and eagerly jumped into the back of Pap's truck. The hounds had no formal training, but hunting — like it did to most of the inhabitants of the hills of western Pennsylvania — came naturally to the trio.



The trip to Pap's friend's farm wasn't long, but it seemed so as the excitement continued to build. Pap had his window opened

slightly to allow his cigar smoke to escape, and the resulting breeze was frigid on my hands. It was then that I realized I had forgotten my gloves. When we pulled into the farm and the caravan rolled to a halt, I ran over to Uncle Charlie's truck and told my dad that I had left my gloves back at the house. Uncle Charlie overheard and produced an extra pair of brown lined gloves that were far too big yet served the purpose.

Everyone got ready, and as the dogs whined in anticipation, guns were handed out to the older fellows. The day was perfect: Cold, cloudy and gray, and snow already covered the ground while more drifted down as we headed across the first field.



Halfway across the field stood a lone tree with a small pile of brush around it. The dogs went wild, working around, under and in that pile. Our line of hunters, with the three of us youngsters grouped in the middle, approached the tree. "Git 'em up, Lead!" shouted Pap, as Uncle Charlie kicked and stomped around the briars. Suddenly, before I really knew what had happened, Uncle Charlie set his feet, swung his upper body far to the left and fired. I looked at where he was pointing and saw the three beagles racing toward the fallen rabbit. We all touched the rabbit then watched as Uncle Charlie quickly field-dressed it and placed it in his vest. We continued across the field behind the dogs as the land sloped down toward a treeline, and I thought of how perfect the day was for hunting.

We hunted to that hillside treeline and then turned right to follow it, some of the hunters inside the line, some beyond it, and some paralleling the near side. The topography varied between open fields, woods and dense briar thickets. Each dense briar patch produced cottontails and was another adventure. As the day wore on I could begin to pick out the different voice of each dog.

I raised my head as the draw we were in began to slope upward, and out in front I could make out a road at the top of the next hill as the morning gave way to afternoon. As we retraced our route back to the trucks, I couldn't help but feel that I was experiencing the end of something great. In hindsight, it's funny that the only detail of that day I can't remember is the final tally of rabbits. That's as it should be, though, as the amount of game taken should be the least important part of any hunt.

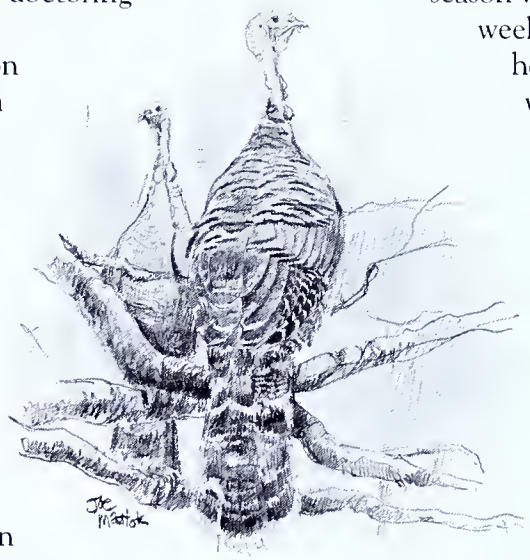
Each fall, as autumn leaves give way to winter's first days, my thoughts turn to cold days and steel-gray winter skies, and I can't help but imagine myself on a snow-covered Pennsylvania hillside, looking out over a briar thicket ringed by a group of anxious hunters, listening to the sweet melody of beagles and the accompanying reports from Ithacas, Winchesters and Remingtons, and the glorious smell of gunpowder.

Pap, Dad, Uncle Char, Uncle Rich, Uncle Jerry, thank you. □

A Special Turkey

By Richard Tate

THE FALL of 1995 was a tough one for my son, Bob. After a successful start to the football season, he suffered a separated shoulder, which sidelined him for more than a month. As his shoulder healed, he became increasingly tired and listless, even when he was allowed to return to action. After a Monday night game, he came down with what we thought was a nasty case of the flu. However, a week of doctoring seemed to have no effect, and finally, on Friday, October 6, a blood test yielded some frightening results. By 6 o'clock we were on our way to the hospital. The doctor had told my wife and me to get him there as quickly as possible, that our strong, energetic son was suffering from extreme anemia, that he had fewer than one third of his red blood cells, a life threatening situation.



After a weekend of worries, testing and blood transfusions, Bob was back on his feet. Of all the horrible things the anemia could have indicated, the final analysis of Bob's condition was the best one we could have hoped for: that his anemic condition had been caused by the medicines he had been taking for his separated shoulder. One hematologist had called it a "classic case of his medicine suppressing the bone marrow's ability to make red blood cells." We were relieved that Bob's condition would gradually improve and that he would eventually return to normal. Although his football season came to a halt, he could gradually return to his other activities, including hunting.

The Pennsylvania fall turkey season was set only three weeks after Bob's hospitalization, and we didn't know if he would be able to hunt. During the two weeks prior to the turkey season, though, he and I made several short squirrel hunting expeditions. Although he didn't have his usual stamina, nothing was wrong with Bob's shooting eye. Still, by the evening before the turkey opener, he had regained much of his energy and we thought he was ready to participate in a full day of turkey hunting, if we didn't try to cover too much ground.

It rained much of the day prior to the opener, and although we wanted to try to put some birds "to bed" that evening, we held little hope of being able to. We didn't want to risk Bob's health by getting soaked, but,

around 5:30 the rain ended, so Bob and I decided to drive to an area where I had roosted birds in other seasons. We walked along a trail at the base of a ridge, heading toward the knob where I thought I could find some turkeys. Suddenly, we spotted a flock. They were out in a harvested cornfield, heading into a brushy ravine, nowhere near the knob where I had hoped to find them. We let them peck their way out of sight and decided to follow them to their roost by looping around them. At dusk the entire flock, consisting mainly of young gobblers and smaller jennies, went to roost less than 70 yards from where we were crouched behind a deadfall.

Suddenly, we spotted a flock. They were out in a harvested cornfield, heading into a brushy ravine.

"Should we flush them?" asked Bob right before fly up time. "That way they'll call in the morning."

Normally I would have wanted to scatter the birds before they had gone to roost. As many expert turkey hunters have told me, this sets up a perfect calling situation for the next morning. However, I was on relatively unfamiliar ground, and in an area where small game hunters would be scouring the next morning. I thought we'd have to set up really close to the turkeys the following morning and try to get one quickly when they came off the roost.

"No, we'll let them alone," I whispered as the birds began to fly up. "There will be too many hunters about tomorrow morning."

After the flock had settled in for the night, Bob and I eased out of the woods. I hung a strip of tissue paper on a bush near an easily located path to mark the spot where we wanted to be situated in the morning.

That night I called my dad and a couple of friends to invite them to join us in the morning. One friend, who knew the area well, decided to hunt a nearby knob. The other friend had located turkeys on his own and told us he was going to try for them.

The next morning Dad set up on one bank of a little saddle while Bob and I set up on the other. Bob was excited and energized. He seemed to have fully recovered. As soon as it was light, it began to rain, so Bob and I scrambled into our raingear. Just after the



Turkey Hunting Safety

The primary cause of turkey hunting incidents is hunters not properly identifying their targets. These incidents occur when hunters hear sounds, see movement or perceive a flash of color they believe to be made by a turkey. Before positively identifying the target as being a turkey, they shoot. Whether it's the excitement of the hunt or just poor judgement, these mistakes have caused injury, and in some cases, death to human beings. Significant improvements in reducing turkey hunting incidents have been made in recent years by educating turkey hunters and enacting fluorescent orange regulations. There is still room for improvement. You can do your part to make turkey hunting even safer this fall by wearing the required 250 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, chest and back combined when moving. The orange may be removed when set up at a stationary calling location, providing a fluorescent orange band at least 100 square inches is posted within 15 feet of the calling location. Hunters in turkey management areas limited to shotguns and bows and arrows (Areas 1-A, 1-B, 9A and 9-B) must wear 100 square inches of fluorescent orange, visible 360 degrees, when moving. In these management areas it is still strongly suggested that a fluorescent orange band be displayed within 15 feet of the setup location.

shower stopped, we could see turkeys still roosted in trees less than 50 yards away.

About that time we heard hollering on the other side of where the turkeys were roosted. I guessed that some rabbit hunters were lining up, and that they'd be in our laps in five minutes. I decided I'd better try a little calling, so I sent out a series of yelps on a little chatterbox. The turkeys began to fly down as the rabbit hunters continued to yell to each other, obviously advancing our way. The birds were quite nervous, but at least they had flown down in our direction. I quickly had one under the gun, only about 30 yards away, when I heard Bob hiss, "They're right below me."

I decided to hold fire until he shot, hoping that both of us could connect. *Boom*! At Bob's shot, turkeys began to run and fly toward our right. The turkey I had under the gun sprinted off before I could pull the trigger, and I was too slow to get on any of the others. Another shotgun blast indicated that one of the turkeys had moved toward my dad. Moments later, things settled down.

Bob called over saying he had killed a turkey. It turned out to be a fine young jake that weighed 13 pounds and had a 3-inch beard. Although Dad had failed to down a turkey, and despite the rest of the day turning out to be a bust, (we were surrounded by six other hunters within five minutes of Bob's shot, precluding any attempts to call back any scattered birds) the young tom that Bob killed was the most special of the half-dozen turkeys he has taken during his short hunting career. Considering the emotions we all endured over the three weeks prior to the season, the gobbler he killed that Saturday morning may well be the most remembered turkey he ever brings home from the autumn woods. □

Dynamic Duo



DALE STOUGH JR. and his son, Jared, from Red Lion, York County, took up bowhunting last year, and couldn't believe what transpired.

Dale says that he and 14-year-old Jared are avid *Game News* readers. "In fact, Jared read the magazine long before he was old enough to hunt," Dale says.

"Early in the spring in 1999 Jared did a little trading with a friend and ended up with a bow. He was insistent on hunting in the upcoming archery season, so I had no choice but to get a bow, too," he continued.

Dale said that he had hunted with a bow in the early '80s, but he never even shot at a deer. "I was a bit reluctant at first, worried we wouldn't have time to practice. I picked up a used bow from a friend, though, and soon Jared and I were practicing."

By the time the archery season rolled around, Jared and Dale had worn out a 3D deer target, and Dale felt they were ready. "I was really excited about the opportunity to be out early in the season, especially with my son," he says.

As can be seen from the photos, Dale and Jared had a special season last year. Jared killed a spike in Juniata County on the last Thursday of the season. "Jared was extremely patient and waited for the buck to get within 10 yards. I was about 40 yards away, and while I don't get buck fever, I shook with excitement when he hit this one," Dale said.

The next day Dale killed a big 8-point in Perry County. "I'm 45 years old and consider this a buck of a lifetime. I don't expect a trophy like this again," he says.



Dale says he's extremely proud of Jared. "It's quite an accomplishment to get your first buck with a bow. I'm glad he gave it his all. It goes without saying that I'm hooked on archery hunting myself."

Dale says he never figured that both he and his son would score on bucks with the bow their first year out. "I'd like to thank the Game Commission for managing our wildlife and the privilege to hunt," he says. □

Deer



WHO SAYS deer don't grow big in Pennsylvania? Look at the spread (27 inches outside) on this buck taken last year by RICHARD MARKEY from York.



NIKI GALE, Carlisle, got this 7-point in Perry County last year.





JOE ZEZZA, Turtle Creek, left, got this big 8-point — his first buck in 35 years — in Forest County. It was certainly worth the wait! EMILY HALSEY, Pottsville, above, got her 11-point trophy on the first Wednesday of the season last year.

JUNIOR LICENSE holder RYAN HACKETT, Elkland, below, took this doe on the first Saturday of buck season last year. SHAWN GRAY, Stewartstown, right, stayed in York County for his buck.





Days





GEORGE M. GRAY, Hollidaysburg, left, took his 8-point buck in Scotch Valley, Blair County. George was a sniper in the 83rd Division Rifle Company, U.S. Army, during World War II. It's apparent he's maintained his marksmenship skills. RICHARD A. BURDYN, Throop, above, took his trophy 11-point in Wayne County.





JASON MELTON, Butler, left, stayed in Butler County and got this 7-point — his first — on the first Saturday last season. HEATHER SHEVCHIK, Ebensburg, above, took her 6-point in Venango County.



ANDREW EPPLEY, Carlisle, with his proud grandfather, Clarence Eppley, and his spike taken on opening day last year in Lycoming County. Andrew used a vintage Model 99 .300 Savage that has been used since 1948 by three generations of Eppleys.

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

Return to Blackwater

TRYING TO BEAT an approaching summer storm, a father and son work silently and quickly with their digging bars around the base of a weathered stump. They pry and pick and come at it from new angles, but the gnarled roots grip the black, rocky earth like a great fist. The father finds a solid purchase and the stump moves slightly, then his son is tight beside him with his bar and their eyes meet and together they strain until the cords stand out on their necks. The stump rises slowly and topples in the crater. For a while they sit on the rim of the hole, sharing water from a quart jar, staring at the stump as if it were a fallen beast.

"That's the last one, Dan. Now we can plant this field next year. Let's roll it down by the creek, then I got to get ready for work."

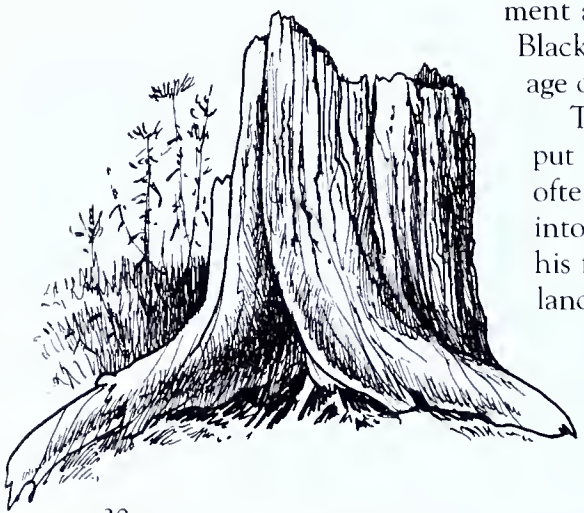
Dan turned when his mother called from the porch of the farmhouse.

"Daniel! Fitch! Time to eat!" She always called him Daniel; not Dan or Danny. It was her formal manner, although she seldom called his father by anything but their last name.

Dan's parents were a study in contrast. His father was powerfully built, with hands as big as plates and hair as black as the bituminous coal he mined. His face always bristled with dark stubble, and he had the pallor of one who works in the bowels of the earth. Fitch was a man of few words, but of good, dry humor.

Dan's mother was fair-haired and tall, taller by an inch than his father, and rail thin. Everyone called her "Bird," for she was a gifted singer. When she sang in church it seemed as if an angel had joined in from above, for that voice could not be of this mortal world. Bird had an aura of refinement about her that was reflected in the tidy little farmhouse ingeniously decorated with wildflowers and mismatched crockery and handmade linens.

It was the dream of his parents to own their own farm, and working in the mines made it possible. They saved enough to get a down payment and earlier that year bought the small farm by Blackwater Creek, with an option to buy more acreage on the other side.



The farm needed much work, and 17-year-old Dan put in long summer days doing his part. At dusk he often sat on the back porch watching deer come out into the fields and was eager for the fall when he and his father would hunt together, here on their own land.

Dan became good friends with two neighbor boys, Scott Fetrow and his younger brother, Ted. The trio also had plans to do some hunting together, even though there was

bad blood between Scott's father, Chaz, and Fitch. Chaz Fetrow had wanted to buy Blackwater Farm, but the previous owner didn't care for Fetrow's pushy ways and instead sold it to Fitch. Fetrow's land bordered Blackwater Farm on the north. He tacked No Trespassing signs along the property line, but when a new survey showed that he had to take them all down and move them back 10 yards, it infuriated him so much that he forbid his boys to invite Dan over, even though the Fetrow boys were always welcome at Blackwater Farm.

THE RAINS began late in August of 1950 and continued into September. The ground was saturated, not like the usually sere landscape of early fall when only the pointed tips of deer tracks showed in the hard-packed ground. Blackwater Creek was crystal clear, called that because of the dark, alluvial soil that rimmed its lazy freestone course. But this year the creek ran high and wild and gray, with a foamy flotsam that gathered in the eddies. It rained all through September, and especially hard that day when a mining company car pulled into the barnyard, and a man from the company store told them that Fitch and four other miners were in an accident.



Dan and Bird clung to hope for days, each passing hour an eternity. But even the strong light of their hope dimmed as the days passed, as no doubt the headlamp of his father had burned on and dimmed as he lay deep in the bosom of the mountain. Both those lights extinguished, as all light eventually must, and Dan just wanted it all to end.

The skies remained gray until the day of the memorial service at the mine. The surrounding rural community rode in boxcars up to the mine, as the road had washed out in places and was impassable. It was chilly that October morning, and the deep hollow was full of swirling mists. Webworm tents sagged in the tree branches and ravens croaked from high ledges. As the train climbed the grade Dan saw that the tops of the hills were gaining color. He had forgotten that there was color in the world.

When they reached the mine the sun bore down through the ascending mists. A local politician who had missed the train rode up on horseback along with a spokesman from the mining company. They both addressed the gathering briefly, and the minister led all in prayer. The politician pulled a draped cloth from a large upright obelisk of sandstone in which was set a bronze plaque inscribed with the names of the lost miners.

At the end of the service, Bird came forth and sang "Amazing Grace." Not one person joined in as might be expected, for the notes rang so clear and held so much emotion that it said it well enough for all of them. No sweeter strains ever echoed through that primeval hollow, not the song of a thrush or chorus of wind in trees or timeless rill of a mountain stream could compare. When she finished, all that could be heard was the steady drip of water, and it seemed at that moment that the mountain itself ached and wept, and that, too, was tears enough for all of them.

BIRD KNEW she had to sell the farm, and Chaz Fetrow snapped it up immediately. In November they moved to the city where she found a job in a shoe factory. They

rented a small third floor walk-up apartment. Dan found part-time work at a dairy while finishing high school. He assisted Mr. Clooney, a milkman who had difficulty loading the heavy milk crates and climbing flights of steps at four in the morning. It was Mr. Clooney's last year, and Dan hoped to take over his route when he retired. On their long, circuitous route on the edge of the city Dan could see the mountains in the distance and daydreamed that he and his father were hunting deer in the bottomland along Blackwater Creek. But all that was gone now.

After loading the milk truck early one Monday morning in late November, Mr. Clooney swung back by Dan's apartment where Bird was standing out front with a bundle on the sidewalk next to her. She boarded the truck and handed Dan a burlap sack that held his hunting coat and license and his father's rifle rolled in a blanket.

"There's sandwiches in the coat, Daniel, and a knife and a rope," she said. "Now go get a big one."

"Where?" asked Dan incredulously.

"Mr. Clooney will get you there," Bird said, smiling and waving as they pulled away. It had been a long time since he saw her smile.

"If anyone back at the dairy asks you where we were, just tell 'em the truck broke down," Mr. Clooney said. "This is the first time in 32 years that my morning deliveries will be late."

For an hour they drove north far into the mountains when Dan recognized the serpentine course of the road as the one that followed Blackwater Creek. There was a faint smear of light above the contour of Shade Mountain when Mr. Clooney pulled onto a dirt road on the west end of Blackwater Farm. Two hunters came out into the headlights and Dan immediately recognized them as Scott and Ted.

"It's about time you got here Fitch. It's almost full light," said Ted.

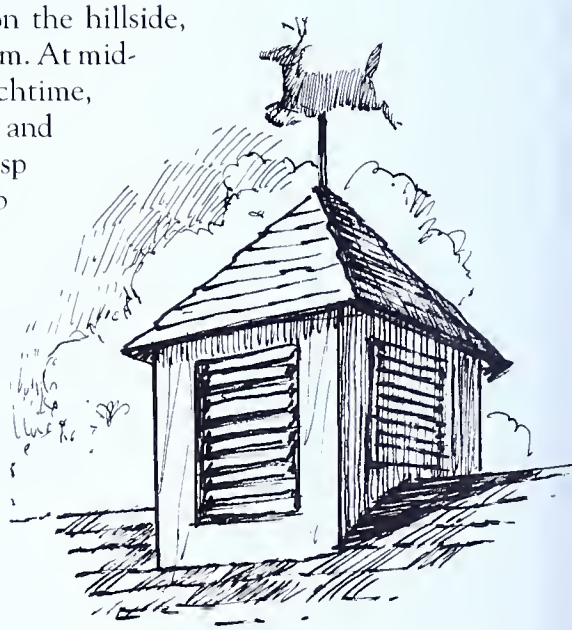
"Yeah, and there's a big one runnin' around in here on your old place," Scott added. "We had to meet you here. You know how Pop is. We lined this up with your Mom."

"I'll pick you up here at dark," said Mr. Clooney. "Good Luck, boys."

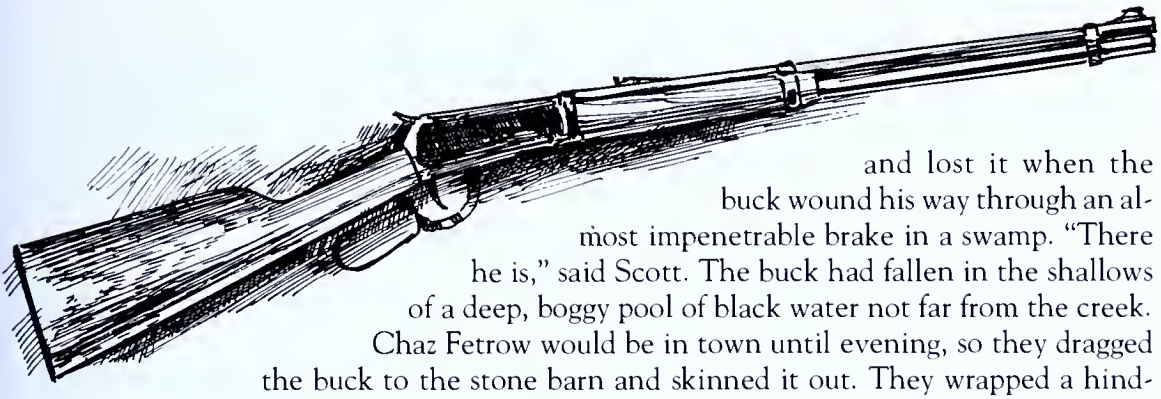
The young hunters walked along a fence line that ran down to the creek.

"Look here," whispered Scott, "Something ripped a strand from this fence the whole way down."

Scott and Ted posted at a crossing up on the hillside, while Dan took a stand along the creek bottom. At midmorning several does browsed by. Near lunchtime, Scott and Ted walked towards Dan's stand and kicked out a deer. Dan heard a rustle in the crisp leaves and climbed up on an inverted stump for a better look, recognizing the stump as the same one that he and his father had wrested from the field. Dan could not believe his eyes at the size of the huge buck that was sneaking along a trail towards him. The massive antlers were wide sweeping with 12 tall tines. A big knot of twisted wire was wrapped around the right beam. His father's .30-30 leapt at the shot and the buck bolted away.



They followed the blood trail for a hundred yards through the dense cover



and lost it when the buck wound his way through an almost impenetrable brake in a swamp. "There he is," said Scott. The buck had fallen in the shallows of a deep, boggy pool of black water not far from the creek. Chaz Fetrow would be in town until evening, so they dragged the buck to the stone barn and skinned it out. They wrapped a hindquarter and some choice cuts in the burlap bag for Dan to take back.

The rack was immense — an armature for legends. Dan said he would pick the antlers up on his next trip out on a winter rabbit hunt. Scott sawed the rack off and climbed up into the cupola of the old stone barn and nailed it there where his father wouldn't find it.

Mr. Clooney happily accepted the backstrap that Dan had saved for him. That night Bird prepared a sumptuous meal of steak and potatoes. She was overjoyed at his success, and he excitedly told her every detail of the buck sneaking along, and of how he had perched on the big stump that held him up like a great hand just above the thicket.

DAN NEVER made it back to the farm that winter to get his antlers. Scott enlisted in the army after graduation but never returned from Korea. Dan married a girl named Lily, and they raised two daughters who sang as beautifully as their doting grandmother. After college, his girls took over his corner feed and equipment store, and soon expanded it to two stores with large lawn and garden centers and landscaping services. He left the business to his capable daughters and their husbands. Lily was tired of suburban life, so they decided to find a little place in the country.

On a lark, Dan drove by the Blackwater Farm one autumn afternoon and saw the realty sign in front of the small farmhouse. Two days later the farm was theirs. It hadn't changed much, except that now it would be easy to fix up, with lots of room for hunting.

Tom, Dan's son-in-law, steadied the ladder while Dan climbed up into the cupola of the stone barn. The antlers were still there where Scott had nailed them up. Birds' nests were plastered to the tines, and the beams were studded with the adobe nests of mud dauber wasps. The knot of wire had rusted into a solid ball. The antlers were even larger than he remembered. They had shrunk and whitened, but had been protected from the elements.

Tom whistled while his eyes swept the wide arc of the rack. "You know, this has got to be one of the biggest bucks ever taken in the state. I heard your story before but had no idea that buck was this big. You've got to get this rack scored. They could be valuable. You know, an antler collector might even pay a lot for them."

After Tom left, Dan walked along the somber creek. The stump was long gone, but numerous deer trails still etched the dark ground. He came to the black pool and studied his reflection in the flat black water. The last time he gazed into this pool a young man stared back, tall and wide-eyed. Dan tossed the antlers out into the pool and watched the pale bones sink slowly into the murky depths.

If antlers were symbols, he thought, then this is where these antlers would always remain. Not in any record book, or in some collector's display, but forever here along the quiet currents of Blackwater Creek.

And that was all that he ever wanted for himself.

FIELD NOTES

Banner Year

Beaver County Farm-Game manager Jeff Noah said that twin fawns, as well as triplets, were quite common this year, and a doe with only one fawn was rare.

— LMO George Miller, Pittsburgh



Pass it on Down

Monroe — With oversized hip boots, traps in hand, and smiles ear to ear, 20 future furtakers ranging from 7 to 15 years old took to the grounds of the Kunkletown Rod and Gun Club to participate in the Pennsylvania Trappers Association's Youth Trappers Day on August 13. Introducing the youngsters to the art of trapping were some of the most experienced furtakers in the Pocono region. Hats off to the PTA and the Kunkletown Sportsmen for their continued effort in passing on our proud hunting and trapping heritage.

— WCO Mark S. Rutkowski, Swiftwater

Agile

Lancaster — I was driving down a farm lane when my vehicle startled a mouse that jumped into the air, and I watched in amazement as a black snake also became airborne and caught the mouse.

— WCO Linda L. Swank, Kirkwood

Take Note

Forest — Every spring my wife and I and our children pick up litter along the one-mile stretch of road we live near. I'm no longer amazed at the amount of litter we pick up. I can only hope that my children will learn to respect our environment. I can still vividly remember the public service message seen on TV in the early '70s, showing the tears of a Native American as he looked over a landscape filled with trash. I wish others would think about that message when they're about to deposit trash where it doesn't belong.

— WCO Richard T. Cramer, Tionesta

Quick Service

Berks — The employees at Ream's Garage in Fleetwood take pride in the work they do and the service they provide. However, one recent customer left without paying or even thanking them. It seems a doe ran into an open service bay door, bounced around throughout the garage then exited through the back door.

— WCO Chuck Lincoln, Leesport

Wide As it is Tall

Allegheny — In July I contacted Don Hopey, a staff writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, who was writing an article on national and state champion trees. It seems a Virginia pine tree on SGL 203 near Wexford was recorded as a state champion tree several years ago. I met with Don at the game lands and, with directions from the region's foresters, we set out to locate the big pine. Nearly three hours later in the unbearable humidity we located the tree. It still would have been the largest Virginia Pine in the state if most of it hadn't snapped off. We measured it at 85 inches in circumference and 93 inches tall.

— WCO Gary M. Fujak, Pittsburgh

Can't Do it Alone

HUNTINGDON — Our deputy WCOs play a vital role in wildlife conservation. I would like to recognize Deputy Lanny Cornelius for being selected as District Deputy of the Year, recently retired Deputy Steve Heaster for his years of service, and all deputies for their enthusiasm and dedication.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Just a Reminder

JEFFERSON — People riding ATVs where they shouldn't is a big problem here, and probably the most common excuse I hear from people caught riding is, "But I don't have anywhere to ride at home." To anyone who is contemplating purchasing an ATV, if you aren't going to ride on the designated trails, properties where you have advance permission, or your own property, then don't buy one.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Caffeine Cakes?

Several of us were eating breakfast at a restaurant before setting up for the Becoming an Outdoor Woman (B.O.W.) program when one member of our group, who was busy talking and not paying attention, poured coffee from a small decanter, thinking it was syrup, over his pancakes. How did they taste, Don?

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION, DALLAS

"Shell" Shocked

PERRY — Deputy Dave Wolf and I were lying flat of the ground just as dawn was breaking one morning during gobbler season, looking over a heavily baited area. Dave carefully peered over a log in front of him and saw what appeared to be a snake's head just inches from his nose. I heard a muffled commotion as the reptile toppled off the log onto Dave. I don't know who was startled more: my deputy or the clumsy box turtle.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERSTOWN

Replacement?

BUCKS — Nine months of training prepared us for many challenges, but I must say the biggest challenge thus far has been the retirement of 37-year veteran Deputy Roscoe White. If you know someone who has 100 hours a month to volunteer and has handled a myriad of wildlife situations, I'm looking for a dependable deputy and mentor. I wish you all the best in retirement, Roscoe.

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, FOUNTAINVILLE

Dedicated

MONTGOMERY — Christopher Underwood from Manchester, England, came to the Towamancin Township Fire House to attend a Hunter-Trapper Ed class. He's going to return in the fall to hunt here in Pennsylvania.

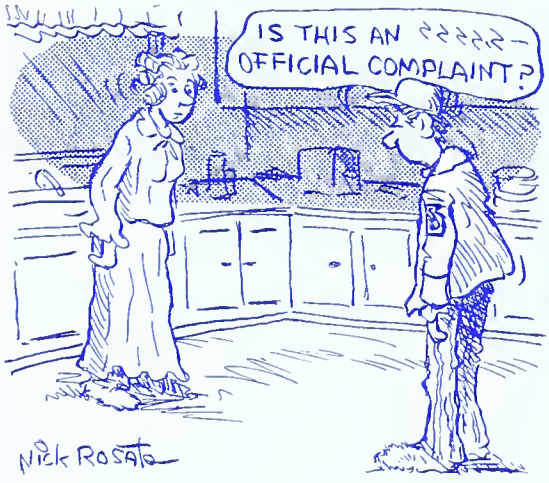
— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



Incentive

BEDFORD — My neighboring WCO in Fulton County, Steve Leiendecker, was keeping an orphaned fawn in his garage while trying to find a propagator to permanently adopt it. This lasted for several days until one morning when Steve put on his boot and discovered a smelly deposit in it. He then insisted his "big brother" WCO (yours truly) immediately find the fawn a home in Bedford County.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT



On Your Own Time

LYCOMING — When my phone rings after 10 p.m. it's usually our dispatcher calling with something that needs immediate attention. Recently, I drug myself out of bed to answer a call well after midnight, only to find that it was my wife on the downstairs phone insisting I come down immediately to remove a small rodent from the kitchen. I wish she would have gone through the right channels, so I at least could have gotten some overtime.

— WCO TERRY WILLS, WILLIAMSPORT

Popular

SCHUYLKILL — WCO John Denchak and I were patrolling Swatara State Park when we encountered two hikers from Pittsburgh along the Appalachian Trail. One of the men greeted us with, "Hey, are you the guys who write Field Notes?"

— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE

Just a Click Away

I got a call from a woman from Alabama who was having trouble with groundhogs. She said she called us because a web search for groundhog information brought her to the Game Commission web site, where she obtained our phone number. I helped her with her problem, and after I hung up I thought that long distance assistance isn't what it used to be.

— JOE KOSACK, INFORMATION SPECIALIST, HARRISBURG

Multiple Use

When Food & Cover Corp worker Bob Johnson rounded a bend on a road at SGL 169 in Cumberland County he had to swerve to avoid hitting a van parked near a food plot. It seems a professional photographer was taking advantage of some sunflowers in full bloom, and in his excitement to get his shots failed to pull completely off the road.

— LMO STEVEN SPANGLER, EAST BERLIN

Big Catch

Jerry Vargo went to Centre County to turkey hunt and fish for trout. He caught a few fish one evening, and left his gear in the truck while he went gobbler hunting the next morning. After coming out of the woods he noticed muddy bear tracks around and on his truck. It seems a bear with two cubs had broken into the cap on the back of his truck and taken his fishing creel. Jerry found his creel in the woods and noticed that the bears had ripped it open and got to his bait container, eating all his worms.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Ironic

CHESTER — I find it strange that most of the people who report nuisance wildlife do not hunt, nor do they allow hunting on their property. But it's these same people that I end up investigating for unlawfully taking wildlife. Their reason: There's too many animals on their property.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, UWCHLAND

Good Advice

MCKEAN — In my district alone there are 157 private landowners enrolled in the Safety Zone program, with a whopping 28,804 acres available for public hunting. All these landowners ask in return is a little common courtesy. Please don't litter or drive through fields, and make sure you have permission.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Close but Not Quite

GREENE — I was demonstrating how we operate our mechanical deer to a group of kids, and after asking the group what illegal activity the decoy was designed to deter one eager student answered, "drive by shootings." Now if I can only find that in my law book.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Zapped Again, Charlie

BRADFORD — Deputy Charlie Fox was having problems teaching his dog to stay in the yard, so he installed a wireless fence. One day he left the dog out of the kennel, and while trying to put the collar on him, the dog ran. Charlie gave chase with collar in hand, and when he crossed the wire he got zapped. Now, I can believe Charlie did this, but what I can't believe is that he told me about it. He knows me well enough to realize it would become my latest Field Note.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



Plan Ahead

CRAWFORD — Trappers looking for places to catch beavers should contact their district WCOs to find areas where calls about nuisance animals are numerous. You might find some good trapping locations as well as make friends of landowners, and you'll definitely get on the good side of some WCOs.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Hasty Retreat

CLEARFIELD — My wife told me there were mouse droppings all over the patio table, so I went to investigate. I smiled when I saw the droppings, and my tapping on the closed table umbrella brought some high-pitched squeaks, confirming my suspicions. I tried to tell my wife that the dropping were left by a little brown bat, but she didn't stick around long enough to see it. I did hear her say something about this being a good Field Note as she was running into the house.

— WCO DAVID L. STEWART, DUBOIS

Foiled?

CLINTON — Last August I responded to a call from Don Prebble about two coyotes attacking a fawn near North Bend. When I got there I noticed a fawn standing at the edge of Don's backyard, nervously glancing into the woods. There was blood on the fawn's hind legs, but otherwise it seemed to be okay. Don had chased the coyotes away, but I had to wonder if they were waiting for the fawn in the woods.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Echo?

ELK — In September I was showing a video about elk at the new amphitheater at the elk viewing area, and every time a bull bugled on the video, a real bull would bugle from a nearby field. I was glad when the video ended, because I figured a few more minutes and the real bull would have come looking for a fight.

— WCO DOTY A. MCDOWELL, SAINT MARYS

Ruffled Feathers

BERKS — Officials at a local landfill called me about an American kestrel that had all its tailfeathers singed when it perched on a large flame vent. The bird is recovering, but it will probably be a long time before it molts the feathers and replaces them with new ones allowing it to fly once again.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

Working Together

When Pennsylvania hosted the Eastern States Elk Management Workshop last summer, attendees from throughout the eastern United States and Canada were treated to a tour of elk habitat project areas. The quantity and quality of habitat work amazed all of the visitors, and they were equally impressed by the many partnerships between state agencies, conservation groups and private industry that help to make the elk program so successful here.

— LMO Colleen M. Shannon, Grampian

Good Advice

I stopped a couple of individuals for a late spotlighting violation and asked them if they hunted and if they knew what time they needed to stop. They both were hunters and neither knew what time spotlighting hours ended. They said they were never told that spotlighting ended at 11 p.m. at their HTE courses. That may be true, but every year a digest of hunting and trapping regulations comes with the license you buy. Please take the time to read it.

— WCO Harold J. Malehorn, SE Region Office, Reading

Quite a Trophy

In a Field Note in the May issue I mentioned an albino turkey frequenting SGL 198 in Blair County. At a recent meeting with Joe Krug of the PA State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, he told me the bird was harvested last spring by Gerry Weakland.

— LMO Stephen A. Kleiner, Altoona

Helping Hand

Northampton — Friend and veterinarian Dr. Frank Bostick has donated his time and expertise on a variety of injured wildlife. The list includes an osprey, black bear and, most recently, a yellow crowned night heron. Dr. Frank's willingness to help has certainly benefited some of our not-so-common wildlife and is truly appreciated.

— WCO Bradley D. Kreider, Cherryville

Happy Ending

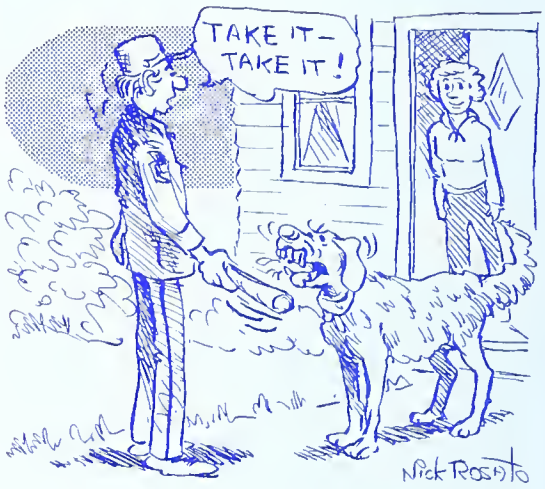
Monroe — Responding to a call about a skunk with a yogurt container stuck on its head, I was contemplating how many washes it would take to get the odor out of my uniform. Lucky for me, though, the container came free with a resounding pop and the skunk hurried back into the woods.

— WCO Peter F. Sussenbach, Blakeslee

Watchin' the Show

McKean — Two young men watched intently as a couple of bears tore apart their dad's new 3-D deer archery target. They were so intent on watching the bears that they didn't think to try to chase them off, much to the dismay of their father.

— WCO Len Groshek, Smethport



Stepping on Some Paws

Mercer County Farm-Game manager Dave Kaulen was contacting cooperators and delivering seedling order forms. At one farm Dave stepped out of the truck, seedling order form in hand and was promptly greeted by a growling, snarling dog. A lady came out of the house and said, "He won't hurt you. He just wants to carry the paper you have." Dave rolled up the order form and held it out in front of him. The dog gently took the form and delivered it directly to the woman. I guess all that growling and snarling in dog talk translated into, "Hey, that's my job."

— LMO James E. Deniker, Sandy Lake

Charges filed in eagle killing

A JOINT investigation by the Game Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has concluded that in late June, Lee A. Covert, 32, Fort Loudon, Franklin County, allegedly shot and killed an immature bald eagle and removed its talons. The shooting took place on the grounds of the Mt. Parnell Fisheries in Fort Loudon.

Game Commission Southcentral Region Information and Education Supervisor Don Garner also announced that the agency has referred the case to the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, who filed a federal charge against Covert. If found guilty of the federal charge, Covert would face up to one year in prison and/or up to $5,000 in fines. Covert also faces state charges that carry penalties of up to six months in prison and/or up to $2,500 in fines.

WCO Kevin Mountz, who led the investigation, said that he and William Anderson, USFWS special agent, and fellow Game Commission officers conducted more than 50 interviews in four states over two months.

"Information that helped crack this case came from two individuals who saw a news story about the eagle killing on television," WCO Mountz said. "The informants said that they did not realize the significance of the vital information they had until they saw the broadcast."

A necropsy conducted by WCO Mountz and Deputy WCO Joseph Diffenderfer determined a small-caliber firearm was used to kill the eagle. Found in Peters Township by local citizens on June 25, the eagle was an immature; it had not yet developed the white head and tail of an adult.

"This case is another example of the important partnership that exists between the USFWS and the Game Commission," Anderson said. "Over the years, this partnership has resulted in the successful conclusion of many cases on the federal and state level."

While unaware of any possible reward, the two informants stand to share in up to $7,750 in reward monies, provided by: the Game Commission, up to $300, $100 of which may be provided through the agency's TIP Hotline; $100 was contributed by John Peet of West Chester and $100 was contributed by Sam Goodman of Warminster; Mt. Parnell Fisheries in Fort Loudon, Franklin County, up to $200; The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, up to $1,000; The Pennsylvania Deer Association, up to $500; The Pennsylvania Audubon Society, up to $1,000; The Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, up to $1,000; The Fund for Animals, up to $250; Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers, up to $1,000; and under the U.S. Eagle Protection Act, the USFWS may offer a reward of up to $2,500.

"The team of Game Commission and USFWS investigators is to be

commended for their commitment to seeing this case through," said Vern Ross, Commission executive director. I also would like to offer the Game Commission's appreciation to the two informants who helped in this case, as well as all those who stepped forward to offer reward monies."

There were 49 nesting eagle pairs in Pennsylvania this year, and they produced 58 eaglets. Crawford County had 14 nests, followed by Lancaster County with eight. Crawford County has outstanding eagle habitat in the Pymatuning region, while Lancaster County benefits from eagles dispersing from the Chesapeake Bay, which harbors one of the largest bald eagle populations in the eastern United States.

The Game Commission began its bald eagle reintroduction program in 1983, when over seven years 88 eaglets were brought from Saskatchewan, Canada, to Pennsylvania. The eaglets were raised and released from elevated nesting structures in Dauphin and Pike counties. The 7-year project was financed in part by the Richard King Mellon Foundation of Pittsburgh and federal Endangered Species Fund. While the state's bald eagle population has more than doubled over the past three years, the bald eagle still is on Pennsylvania's endangered species list.

Nationally, bald eagles were first protected by the Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940. In 1967, bald eagles were declared an endangered species by the federal government, because their populations had been decimated by the widespread use of the pesticide DDT. By 1998, after more than a decade of reintroductions, the eagle population rebounded and the species was moved to the federal threatened species list. Today, more than 5,700 nesting pairs live in the continental United States.

Bobcat permits drawn

WITH ASSISTANCE from representatives of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Pennsylvania Trappers Association and several sportsmen and sportswomen, the names of 290 individuals were drawn to receive one bobcat permit each for the 2000-2001 hunting and trapping season. The drawing was held September 8 at the Harrisburg headquarters.

The 290 applications were drawn from the 3,274 applications received



MELODY ZULLINGER, representing the PA Trappers Association, draws the first bobcat permit issued by the Game Commission in 30 years. Bureau of Information and Education Director Carl Graybill, left, along with Commissioner Steve Mohr and Bureau of Wildlife Management Director Cal DuBrock participated in the drawing.

by the application deadline; a substantial number of applications were received after the deadline, and they were not part of the drawing. An additional 30 applications were drawn as alternates, in case any of the first 290 individuals are declared ineligible.

"After 30 years of protection and 15 years of field research, the bobcat population in many areas of the state has recovered to a point where it can once again sustain a limited and highly regulated season," said Vern Ross, Commission executive director. "While some people may oppose this hunting and trapping opportunity, the Game Commission views the opening of these seasons as a wildlife success story.

"We do not believe that the limited seasons will have any impact on the continued growth and success of the bobcat population. In fact, if there was even the remotest possibility that this plan would have a negative impact, the Game Commission would never have considered the season."

Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management Director Calvin DuBrock and Commission Bureau of Information and Education Director Carl Graybill conducted the drawing. Game Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr, who chairs the Commission's Wildlife Management Committee, witnessed the drawing.

Nancy Heiser, Chris Rosenberry and Matt Lovallo, all of the agency's Bureau of Wildlife Management, cross-referenced the applications drawn with the computer database to ensure that each hunter and trapper submitted only one application. Ross and Commission Bureau of Law Enforcement Acting Director Dave Overcash were witnesses for this process.

Applications were accepted until Aug. 31, by mail, from holders of resident furtaker licenses or junior or senior combination licenses, along with a nonrefundable $5 fee.

Those selected in the random drawing received one permit, for no additional charge, to either hunt or trap one bobcat. The hunting season runs from Oct. 14- Feb. 24, and the trapping season from Oct. 15- Feb. 24. The hunting and trapping of bobcats is restricted to Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3.

"Based on our extensive research, we estimate the current adult bobcat population to number 3,500," said Lovallo, Commission furbearer biologist. "We have set a conservative objective of 175 bobcats to be harvested in northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania, the only areas in the state open for hunting or trapping of bobcats under the plan that was adopted."

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Pennsylvanians perform well at YHEC

"I DON'T REALLY have a favorite event," said 18-year-old Garth Babcock of Rome, during the NRA's International Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) held in late July near Mansfield. "I just like to compete in everything."

An understatement by any stretch of the imagination. Garth and his Pennsylvania teammates dominated the event, which attracted 247 youngsters from 18 states and Saskatchewan.

Garth repeated as individual senior division (ages 15-19) top gun and was a member of Pennsylvania's championship senior division team. The Keystone State contingent didn't stop there. Garth's younger brother, Devon, placed second in the junior (ages 14 and under) individual category, and he and his junior teammates finished second overall.

Pennsylvania entries now have logged International YHEC titles six years running, with championships coming the last two years at the Tioga Hammond Recreation Area near Mansfield, Tioga County. Prior to that, Keystone State YHEC flag bearers earned several titles in competition held at Raton, New Mexico.

This year's five-day International YHEC event included competition in eight events: .22 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, archery, orienteering, hunter safety trail, wildlife identification, and a written hunter safety exam.

Garth Babcock scored 1820 points out of a possible 2400, bettering his 1999 winning tally by nine points. Pennsylvania's senior championship team included Garth, Adam Green of Warren Center; Ed and Pete Rosenberger, Athens, and Ted Them, Sayre.

The Pennsylvania teams qualified for the International YHEC event through a state competition held in late June at the Game Commission's Scotia Range near State College.

In the qualifying event, Garth finished second to Ed Rosenberger for high-overall honors. Rosenberger's score totaled 1,045, while Garth logged 975 points in second. Dustin Troutman of Herndon was third with 915.

The Sayre Senior Blue team took state senior honors with an overall score of 4,445. Members included Garth, Ted Them, Adam Green and Ed and Pete Rosenberger. The Rock Run Raiders finished second with Todd Puderbach, Tim Reichart, Mike Eakin, William Rogers and Joshua Chonko.

The Big Spring Fish & Game entry from Cumberland County, placed third in senior team competition with Matthew Mixell, Brian Dorsey, Brian Wiser, Justin Moore and Wade Snyder.

Devon Babcock was state individual junior champion with 940. Sayre Junior Blue teammate, Lynsey



Keith Snyder

PENNSYLVANIANS have now logged International YHEC titles six years running, with championships coming the last two years.

Arnold, was second, 845; and Craig Sheeley, Troy Junior Blue, third, 795.

The Sayre Junior Blue entry captured junior division team honors behind Babcock, Arnold, Jarrod Chandler, Jacob Druck and Benjamin Green. Troy Junior Blue finished second with Sheeley, Jordan Streeter, Kevin Wray, Christopher Connell and Jeff Campbell. Third place went to the Southern Clinton County Green team of Garrett Desmond, Kyle Dolan, Jordan Day, Andres Noll and Nathan Whitman.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has supported the NRA's YHEC program for well over a decade on both state and national levels.

Bernardi, Hill top Game Commission marksmen

STEVEN BERNARDI, Land Management Officer (LMO) in the Southcentral Region, and Deputy WCO Coy Hill, were crowned individual champions of the Game Commission Revolver Championship, held at the agency's Scotia Range in Centre County.

Bernardi put a 486-20x score into the record books to lead salaried officers. Wildlife Conservation Officer (WCO) David Carlini of Clearfield County was runnerup for the second year in a row, shooting a 482-28x. WCO Terry Wills of Lycoming County, the 1999 champion, placed third with a score of 481-23x.

Hill defended his championship in the deputy WCO category. The Fulton County officer shot a score of 490-26x. Adams County Deputy WCO Craig Hartley placed second with a score of 481-28x, while Norm Carr, another Fulton County deputy, finished third at 481-26x.

While salaried officers and deputy WCOs compete in separate individual categories, it's important to note that annual firearms training and qualification for all Game Commission law enforcement officers is conducted under identical, strict guidelines.

Fulton County officers continued their domination of the four-man team competition. Robert Strait, Stephen Leiendecker, Hill and Carr put up a combined score of 1,912-90x, which no other quartet could challenge. This title has gone to Fulton County every year since 1994. J.W. Dingle, Chip Brunst, Robert Rumbaugh and Darrell Bowers of Butler County finished second, with a score of 1,823-60x. The Centre County squad of Mike Ondik, Frank Scott, William Sipple and Clark Reese Sr. was third with 1,821-56x.

Wills and James Neylon Jr. captured the two-man team competition for Lycoming County with a score of 958-46x. Mark Fair and Larry McCarter of Dauphin County placed second at 939-38x, while Steve Frye and Chris Ivicic, Clearfield County, finished third with 938-40x.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Bear Season, Nov. 20-22

BEAR SEASON this year runs from Monday, Novmber 20, through Wednesday, November 22. Every hunter who gets a bear must within 24 hours take it, along with his hunting license and bear hunting license, to an official Game Commission bear check station.

There are two new check station locations this year, one in Lycoming County and the other in Fulton County. Check the following list for specific locations. Unless noted otherwise, check stations will be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the 3-day season. After 9 p.m. on the last day, hunters with bears that need to be checked should contact the appropriate region office.

Last year hunters took 1,740 bears, which was down from 1998's record harvest of 2,598, but still close to the annual average bear harvest over the past 10 years, about 1,800.

Bear hunters must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back. They must possess a regular hunting license and a bear license to participate in the season. The bear license must be in the hunter's possession while afield, but need not be displayed.

Bear hunters may not use scents or lures. In addition, hunters are reminded they cannot hunt in areas where bait or food has been placed within the past 30 days.

Bear check stations

Northwest Region

- Forest County
  Allegheny National Forest Storage Bldg. Marienville
- Jefferson County
  SGL 244, south from Exit 15, I-80 and just off Rt. 205, Reynoldsville
- Venango County
  Northwest Region Office, 1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin
- Warren County
  SGL 309, Rt. 127, 2 miles south of Tidioute

Northcentral Region

- Cameron County
  Sinnemahoning, Intersection of Rts. 120 & 872
- Centre County
  Penn Nursery, Rt. 322 near Potters Mills
- Clearfield County
  S. B. Elliott State Park, Rt. 153 north of I-80, Exit 18
- Clinton County
  Renovo Forestry Bldg.
  Rt. 120, 2 miles west of Renovo
- Lycoming County
  (New Location) Antes Fort Fire Hall, 1/4-mile south of Northcentral Region Office on Rt. 44; and at Trout Run Fire Hall, Rt. 14.
- McKean County
  SGL 62 Bldg., 3 miles north of Mt. Jewett on Ornsby Rd.
- Tioga County
  SGL 208 Bldg., 3 miles north of Gaines on Rt. 349
- Union County
  Bald Eagle St. Forest Headquarters Rt. 45 just west of Rt. 235

Northeast Region

- Bradford County
  Monroeton Rod and Gun Club, (Monday only) off Rt. 220 on

Township Road 402 between Kellogg and South Branch

- Carbon County
  Beltzville State Park Maintenance Bldg., 2950 Pohopoco Dr., just east of Exit 34 Pa Turnpike Northeast Extension
- Luzerne County
  Northeast Region Office, Int. of Rts. 415 & 118, Dallas
- Monroe County
  SGL 127 Bldg., Rt. 423, 2 miles south of Tobyhanna
- Pike County
  SGL 180, Shohola Building, Rt. 6 at Shohola Falls, 13 miles south of Hawley
- Sullivan County
  State Forestry Bldg., Rt. 87, 1.5 miles south of Hillsgrove

Southwest Region

- Indiana County
  Yellow Creek State Park, off Rt. 422, Indiana
- Westmoreland County
  Southwest Region Office, 339 W. Main St., Ligonier

Southcentral Region

- Fulton County
  (New location) Buchanan State Forest Bldg, 4 miles east of Breezewood on north side of U.S. Rt. 30.
- Huntingdon County
  Southcentral Region Office, Rt. 22, 1.1 miles west of Huntingdon

Southeast Region

- Berks County
  Southeast Region Office, 448 Snyder Rd. 7 miles north of Reading
- Dauphin County
  PGC Headquarters, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg

Regular Antlered deer season opens Nov. 27

THE HIGHLIGHT of the year for many hunters, the Pennsylvania buck season, opens this year on Monday, November 27, and runs through Saturday, December 9. This deer season brings some significant changes, too: Junior License holders, Senior License holders, and hunters with a Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) are allowed to take an antlerless deer at any time during the 2-week antlered deer season, providing, of course, that they have a valid Antlerless or Private Land License.

This is just another step in the agency's ongoing efforts to better manage deer and provide additional hunting opportunities.

Hunters must wear at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back combined at all times while afield. They are also advised that it's illegal to hunt within 150 yards of any occupied building without the occupant's permission.

The legal definition of an antlered deer is one with two or more points to one antler, or a spike three or more inches long.

All hunters who take a deer must fill out their harvest tag and attach it to the deer's ear before moving the carcass. (For antlerless deer, use the card supplied with the antlerless license.)A report card documenting the harvest must be mailed to the Game Commission within 10 days after taking the deer. If no report card is available, use the form or facsimile found on page 40 of this year's digest.

For complete deer hunting regulations, refer to the 2000-2001 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

Ternent new black bear biologist

MARK A. TERNENT has been selected as the Game Commission's new black bear biologist, filling the vacancy created when Dr. Gary Alt took over the agency's deer management program a little more than a year ago.

Prior to joining the Game Commission, Ternent served as a black bear and grizzly bear biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department since May 1996. While there, Ternent compiled harvest data and proposed annual harvest goals for the bear management program; participated in bear check station data collection; oversaw and conducted research on black bear and grizzly bear reproduction, mortality, population, habitat use, food habits and conflict abatement; and conducted public outreach and education programs.

From March 1994 until May 1996, Ternent was a research assistant at the Missouri Department of Conservation, where he conducted research and management projects with wild turkeys and prairie chickens. From May 1991 until March 1994 he was employed as a graduate research assistant at the University of Minnesota, specializing in black bears.

A native of Cumberland, Maryland, Ternent earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife-fisheries management from Frostburg State University, Maryland, and a master's degree in wildlife conservation from the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. He was elected a member of the Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society at Frostburg State University.

An author and co-author of many wildlife articles, reports and management plans, Ternent is a member of the International Bear Association and the Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society. He currently lives in Beech Creek, Clinton County, with his wife, Rhonda.

WILLIS SNEATH, director of the Southcentral Region, received the 1999 Conservationist of the Year award from the Pennsylvania Trapper's Association District 5. Presenting the award — a framed print by Gerry Putt — is Joe Folk, District Representative of the PTA.



Another View
By Linda Steiner

Every hunter has a tale of a missed opportunity, but like that old saying goes, "You can't get them all."

The Ones That Got Away

WHAT OCCURS on a typical night-before-opening-day, wherever hunters gather, is not what most nonhunters think. In any group of pre-turkey-season or pre-deer or bear season hunters I've ever been around, no one boasts about the great shots he made, though the hunter might have been so skillful he should have bragging rights. The smart storyteller knows that nobody wants to hear about how wonderful he is. What we want to hear is how similar we are in our modest humanity — that we can all mess up and be made fools of, from time to time, by the game that got away. That's the stuff that brings the largest laughs and rings with truth in the pre-hunt conversations.

So let's talk about the ones that got away. Some of them we never even see. At some point the game was "gettable," but we never knew it. Maybe if the little birds that saw the buck sneak behind us could talk, we'd know that we missed a good chance. These ones that got away made no sound and left no sign, so we can hardly count them.

Others that elude us do make a departing noise and leave evidence of their passing, but too late. We might hear a snort or a scuffling in the leaves, or the *whuh, whuh, whuh* of turkey wings cupping the air. We instantly know what has happened and that game had been close enough to shoot, but we're as certain, as quickly, that this is another one that got away.

When tracks appear behind our stand in the snow, tracks that weren't there when we walked in, we know we've been visited by one that got away. Sometimes the tracks appear in front of us, but we never saw them being made. Why? Because we were asleep.

I know several hunters to whom this old joke happened. They awoke from a sleep they hadn't meant to take, leaning back against a tree trunk with their rifle on their lap, only to find deer tracks in the snow just past their boot tips. Letting ones get away like that didn't seem humorous at the time, but it soon became a funny story worth telling again and again, with nothing hurt but the hunter's pride.

If we've snoozed off or become careless in our vigilance on stand and game passes by, we generally never know. We might see the game fleetingly when we startle awake, or learn about one that got away only because someone else saw it getting past us.

"Didn't you see that deer?" a buddy might say when he reaches us. "I just popped over the ridge toward your stand and saw it going behind you. I thought for sure you saw it; I kept waiting for the shot. It was so close."

All that can be done then is admit you goofed by not paying attention, or invent a good excuse for why you couldn't see or

hear the deer — blame it on your hearing aid batteries or fogged up lenses. The certainty is that this one-that-got-away story will be told with vigor around the camp that night, though probably not by you.

I haven't had any of these scenarios happen exactly that way to me, but I do recall a dull, misty archery season day, the kind when the sun never seems to come up. The dimness, combined with a short night's sleep and the unseasonable warmth of the air, was putting me to sleep every time I sat down to take a stand. I found a spot to crouch and hide along a high stone wall, 15 to 20 yards from an opening I hoped deer would pass through. My eyes got heavy, nothing seemed to be moving, and I laid my head on my arms. I thought I would listen for approaching deer.

I heard them all right, when the stomp next to me woke me up. I jumped and looked up into the eyes of a doe, just on the other side of the stone wall. She and two other deer must have been moving parallel to the wall, and I never heard them. I don't know why she noticed me; maybe I snored. The deer snorted, practically in my face, and all three got away. What I had in hand was a tale to tell on myself to the rest of the group at quitting time, and a resolution to get more sleep the night before I hunted, so I could keep sharp.

Bob Steiner



Among the ones that got away are those that came very close to being "gotten." That is, we were able to shoot and we missed, or we almost took a shot. Missing can shake our self-confidence, make us resolve to get a solid rest against a tree or on our knees, or force us to promise we'll take more range practice, so no more get away like that. Sometimes, though, trees jump in the way. My dad has a fine "trophy" of a broadhead stuck in a tree stub that he didn't see, scant feet in front of the doe that was his target. I blew up a soft stump with a shotgun slug when I shot at a standing deer. The doe was startled, and I stared at the splintered wood between us and let her run away. I felt so foolish at not noticing the stump that I figured she deserved becoming one that got away.

We may let the game get away by choosing not to take the shot; maybe going so far as to follow the animal in the sights and decide at the critical moment not to shoot. This, I think, is one of the finest hours, or rather moments, of a hunter. We have the power to shoot or not shoot, and the greater skill is often in deciding not to squeeze the trigger or release the arrow. Perhaps something about the sight picture is not right, the game moving too fast for a confident rifle shot, or moving at all for a bow shot, or the animal turning to an angle that won't allow a clean heart/lung kill.

Not to preach, but that discretion is at the heart of being a sportsman and reveals the heart of a hunter. The game got away, but we controlled the situation and we let it get away, you might say with our blessing. Another time, another place, another circumstance, and the happy weight of a drag would have been behind us. But this time just wasn't right.

This is an important lesson for the hunter who is growing in his sport, that an

HOW MANY times did one like this sneak past your stand unseen?

animal passed up today because of an unsure shot may be there tomorrow, especially if the hunter is in the same area again. Many game animals are homebodies, with small ranges and set habits, walking the same trails to the same food sources. If a chancy shot is taken and the animal hit badly, and lost, it can't be there the next day to offer a better shot. Don't shoot and the worst you have is the memory of one that got away; shoot, hit wrong and lose the animal, and a hurt will fester inside you.

Perfection is not part of the natural order, and no matter how diligent, skillful and responsible we try to be, an accident of circumstance or human error can result in a game animal hit and lost. Perhaps a bullet or arrow that should be headed for the heart and lungs goes awry through misjudgment or mechanical problems, or the game moves in an unanticipated way, or a sudden rain washes out the blood trail, and the animal is lost. The hunter, often with help from friends, looks and looks, tracks and backtracks, combs the area for the wounded animal, even comes back the next day and tries again, and it is no good.

These ones that got away may recover, or they may succumb to the shot, die and return to the land they lived on, through the recycling actions of nature. The body is never wasted. But to have one get away like that is not a tale to be told with mirth around the campfire. The talk turns serious then, as other hunters commiserate, and those who helped trail rehash the efforts they made to find the wounded game. Though hunters will shoot to kill, it hurts them terribly to injure an animal. Perhaps one tale of a hit-and-got-away before each opening day is just the medicine to cure any temptation to take an iffy shot. Better to have all camp stories of ones that got away be comical, and the game still out there to get away again and make us laugh at ourselves another day. □

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LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Pheasant stocking, maintaining shooting ranges and then operating bear check stations are just some of the tasks that keep LMOs and Food & Cover crews busy this month.

HERE AT LAST, the long-awaited month of the hunter. During November a person can hunt just about every species of game we have, from small game and turkey to bear, and then buck season. This is an exciting time for 12-year-olds — and for us older hunters. A time when kids should be excited about going to hunting camp. A time of fellowship, when family and friends gather to re-tell old hunting stories, catch up on family, and forget about work and the daily pressures of life for a while. It seems, though, that the traditional hunting camp is becoming rare these days. As I talk with hunters it seems that many were at one time connected to a camp or lodge, but few still are.

The camps that are left are no longer "hunting camps" but have become "summer homes." Many of the camps I used to stop at in hunting season are now vacant, and the ones still used are generally filled not with excited youngsters, but aging veterans trying to hold onto the traditions, coming to camp "because they always did." Not long ago every camp was lit on the first night of buck season, porch lights aimed at deer hanging on the game pole. People would drive around to look at all the deer hanging at the camps. Hunters would be lined up at local pay phones, calling home to check in and tell their stories. Remember those days? They seem to be distant memories.

For today's WCOs and deputies, it is a time of non-stop work and little sleep. A time away from their families and increasing stress. Many of us have eaten our Thanksgiving meal re-heated, long after the relatives have left, sometimes the next day. It's also a time when we meet some interesting and colorful characters, especially late at night.

Week One

November opens chilly. We wake up to a snow-covered landscape, but by noon it has all melted. Our Farm-Game managers are busy compiling seedling orders from our cooperators. We need to receive these orders now, so we can order the seedlings to be distributed in April. This helps Jim Bowers and his crew at the Howard Nursery plan and prepare well in advance for the coming shipping and planting season.

The Food and Cover crews start the month by repairing targets and frames on our public shooting ranges. The 4x8 sheets of pressboard and 2x4 framing don't last long under the heavy use these ranges receive this time of year. People are generally waiting in line to sight in their rifles on our ranges.

I meet WCO Al Scott in Clarion and we head for the southern end of the county, to a tract we would like to purchase for a new game lands. I bring my land exam forms and we spend the day hiking around and taking notes. We are excited about the habitat and the potential this area holds,

should it become a game lands. I am concerned about an acid mine drainage site we come across, though, and know it will have to be tested.

While on the tract, we check and talk with several hunters, one who missed a turkey earlier in the day. The steep valleys found here sure give us a good workout, but as we crest the top we are rewarded by a wonderful landscape, which includes a switchgrass field. Switchgrass is an important habitat element because it provides superb small game cover and turkey nesting cover. The stiff stems do not easily bend over and pack down as snow accumulates on top of them, and even with a heavy snow pack, you can find travel tunnels within the stems of a switchgrass field.

The crews finish the week by stocking 2,000 pheasants and returning crates to the game farm, an exercise we will repeat a few times before the end of pheasant season. They are also working to replace signs on game lands backboards, gates and parking areas.

I attend meetings with Clarion County Rails to Trails to discuss future plans for a trail in the county and meet with local engineers to discuss a bridge replacement on a township road passing through game lands.

Week Two

Game Commission Forester Harry Rowles, Foreman Everett Reitz and I meet to start a Wildlife Habitat Assessment and Management System study on SGL 244 in Jefferson County. Through this WHAMS study, we plan to conduct a detailed evaluation of existing habitats on this game lands; identify what the habitat deficiencies are; and develop plans to rectify these deficiencies. The first step in this long process is to break the game lands down into compartments, identify and document the habitat elements found within each compartment. Our meeting lasts most of the day as we go over maps and aerial photos. As we end this session, each of us is responsible for bringing some type of research answers to the next meeting.

Week Three

The crews are working this week — the first week of archery season — to release some of the old apple trees on game lands. Over the years, these old orchards get grown up with other competing trees and shrubs, the apple trees get shaded out and stop producing. By cutting the competing plants, and pruning dead and broken limbs, sunlight can once again reach the apple trees and allow them to produce fruit. This is a time consuming task and, depending upon the site, we may daylight and prune only five or six trees a day.

We again must repair and replace target frames on the heavily used shooting ranges, as it seems everyone is sighting in their rifles this week.

The rest of the week is spent getting the maintenance building on SGL 244 ready to be used for a bear check station. This will be the first time a bear check station will be at this location, and I spend the afternoon talking with the media to get the word out. Even though this is published in the Digest, many people will not realize the check station has moved. Some of my media contacts turn into full-blown interviews, and that's okay, I'm glad to see so many reporters anxious to keep their readers and listeners informed about the current seasons.

This new check station replaces the one held for many years on SGL 54 near Brockway. A decision was made to move the location of this check station to a spot closer to I-80, and our larger facility — and an inside restroom — would accommodate the growing number of visitors. The bear check station is now located on SGL 244 just off of I-80 at Exit 15.

SGL 244 is centrally located within the county, near Reynoldsville. It contains approximately 5,000 acres, and the topography is generally hilly with many small tributaries flowing into Sandy Lick Creek, a



PAUL NYE, Conneaut Lake, brought the first bear into the new check station at SGL 244 last year. The bear was a 187-pound female.

stocked trout stream. Much of this game lands was previously strip-mined but now, thanks to the excellent and relentless work of the food and cover crews over the years, supports some pretty impressive habitat. Areas of this game lands that were not strip-mined are considered "big woods," which are broken up with clearings, regenerating aspen stands, spruce plantations, and a few clearcuts. Many of the ridges here are covered with grapevines and laurel patches. Throw in miles of grassy roads, mountain springs and winter thermal cover, and you have a turkey and grouse hunter's delight. We have areas on this game lands that we manage specifically for rabbits, grouse, turkeys and grassland birds, and we stock pheasants at several locations here. It is a home for deer, and a secret place (no longer) for avid bear and turkey hunters.

This game lands is the home of our Jefferson County food and cover crew with the established headquarters building and equipment storage. It is now the only bear check station located within Jefferson and Clarion counties.

Week Four

I spend the three days before Thanksgiving at the bear check station with PGC biologist John Dunn and the food and cover crews. Every hunter who gets a bear is required to bring it to a check station, so our biologists can record its sex, size and condition. They also look for ear tags and tattoos, which indicate the bear had been previously trapped, and pull a tooth (to be used for aging the bear). My job is to collect harvest location and license information from the hunters, and process the necessary required forms. The food and cover crew is there to help weigh the animals, control traffic, and keep everything running smoothly.

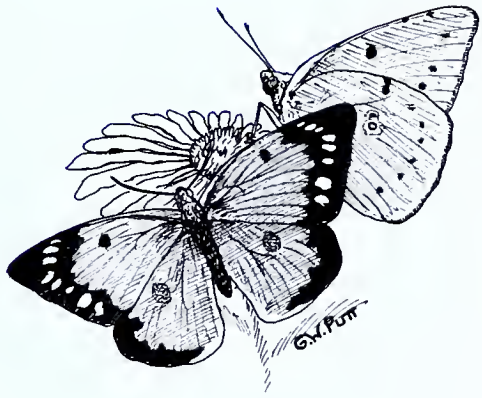
We set up a wildlife display, and have coffee available. The evenings are especially busy, as this is when we get most of our bears and visitors. It sure is good to see parents bring their kids down to get a look at the bears coming in.

Paul Nye of Conneaut Lake took the first bear ever brought into the relocated check station. It was an adult female and weighed 187 pounds. Paul got it at 8:45 on November 22, 1999, here in Jefferson County. During the 3-day season we checked 42 bears, the largest being a 467-pound male. It was a lot of fun, a lot of work and the 14-hour days make me glad it comes only once a year.

The rest of the week brings Thanksgiving, night patrols, the end of small game season, monthly reports, and the long-awaited buck season. □

Grasshoppers, crickets, katydids and lady bugs, just a few . . .

Insects of Indian Summer



~ Orange Sulphur ~

BY NOVEMBER most insects are either dead or hibernating, but some species, both native and alien, are aroused by the soft warmth of Indian summer.

Once again the fields and forests sing with a quieter rendition of the grasshopper-cricket-katydid chorus of late summer and early fall. Bristly great leopard moth and woolly bear caterpillars unfurl from their hibernation quarters under loose bark or hidden in plant materials and crawl across our veranda. An occasional alfalfa or cabbage butterfly flutters weakly over the fields. Swarms of midges dance up and down in the warmth of the setting sun. Hibernating Halloween ladybugs emerge to swarm around us as we sit on the veranda, soaking up the rays.

Every time I hear or see one of these insects so late in the season, I am especially appreciative of what seems almost magical. For a few days, I'm reminded of all that was attractive in the world of summer, because none of these stragglers bite or sting, not even the swarms of midges that seem to rise or fall according to their own rhythm.

Entomologists who have studied swarms of non-biting midges in the families Chironomidae and Cecidomyidae and mosquitoes understand how they swarm but disagree on why. They usually form swarms during periods of fairly rapid changes in light intensity, at sunset and sunrise. Reacting not only to light intensity but to certain temperatures, they fly upwind until they find a swarm marker for their species such as twigs of dead bushes, margins of ponds, or a light or dark spot. Then, according to entomologist Howard Ensign Evans in his classic book *Life on a Little Known Planet*, "they allow themselves to be carried backward by the wind until they approach the leeward margin of the marker, whereupon they begin to control their flight again and finally once again fly upwind to the windward margin." That maneuver is known as a "top swarm."

"Free swarms" form over a flat surface without prominent landmarks, and "ceil-

ing swarms" consist of many midges swarming high over a large area from which vertical columns of midges descend.

Entomologists disagree over whether the swarms are a mate-attracting behavior, since the swarms usually consist almost entirely of males. But some researchers have watched females dart into the swarm where they are seized and mated. Others say little or no mating takes place.

The sound of their wings seems to bring midges together. If you talk or make noise near them, they are confused and only resume their normal flight when it is quiet again. Evans says, "the playing of a musical instrument to a dancing swarm can sometimes produce unusual effects, and a gunshot or loud whistle will often send them into wild disarray."

I must admit that I have never tried this, but one entomologist — Erik Tetens Nielsen — learned to call down swarms by singing high C and high G. He also sent up a net attached to a hydrogen-filled balloon with which he captured a swarm. After studying many swarms in this way he concluded, "We do not know [why midges and mosquitoes swarm]."

Even in England such swarms were noticed long ago. Poet John Keats paid homage to them in his "To Autumn" when he wrote, "While barred clouds bloom in the soft-dying day, And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn Among the river shallows borne aloft Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies . . . "

At least one of the butterflies that survives to flutter through Indian summer would also have been familiar to Keats. The cabbage white or just plain cabbage butterfly (*Pieris rapae*) was introduced accidentally from Europe to North America in1860. A small butterfly marked on its upper wing tip with black, the male has one black spot and the female two on their upper or fore wings. Many people mistake these butterflies for moths because of their color and fluttery, floating, flight pattern.



"Sparrow Hawk"

Europeans call this butterfly the "small white," but they, like us, recognize it as a species that favors the Mustard family. Its yellow-striped, green caterpillar eats cabbage, broccoli, radish, kale, collard and cauliflower plants, as well as more than 20 species of wild plants such as winter cress, peppergrass and, more recently, another alien, garlic mustard. In the Mid-Atlantic States their new-found interest in garlic mustard has lured them, for the first time, from their customary open, weedy habitat to the forest in search of the plant.

The other late-flying butterfly, the alfalfa or orange sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*), comes from our own Southwest. As alfalfa cultivation became common after the 1870s, this western species spread rapidly eastward, reaching the Northeast in the 1930s. A yellow and orange butterfly that has multiple broods sometimes as late as November, it has been recorded as late as December 16 near Philadelphia. Warm spells often encourage its overwintering pupa to emerge prematurely, so it is technically possible to see this butterfly long after its caterpillar food plants — alfalfa,

vetches, and clovers — are finished. My latest date here is November 6, 1995, a day that dawned a cold, clear, 23 degrees after a spell of Indian summer.

Katydids, however, had only begun calling again that year on the second of November, when the temperature hit 66 degrees and continued to rise. Grasshoppers and crickets, also members of the Order Orthoptera, only sing near noon on warm days. They vibrate their wings as if they are arthritic, but even if they are silent and hidden in the tall grasses of First Field, the vigilant male American kestrel dives down and catches them. Every autumn a male kestrel hangs out on our telephone wire and watches for what several studies indicate are their favorite foods. Last November, though, the kestrel appeared only when the days were warm and hazy to prey on the fading singers.

The same weather that re-started the Orthopteran singers also unfurled the bristly, curled balls of two closely related caterpillars already in hibernation. The woolly bear or black-ended bear caterpillar (*Isia Isabella*) hibernates under a rock or log and is well-known in folklore for its ability to foretell the coming severity of the winter based on the size and color of its reddish-brown and black bands.

According to Eric Sloane in his Folklore of *American Weather*, "the wider the middle [reddish-brown] band the milder the winter." Others disagree, saying that if the caterpillar is mostly reddish-brown, the winter will be very cold.

Still others base their prognosis of the weather on the lightness or darkness of the woolly bears' colors. If they are very light, the winter will be mild and short; if they are very dark, the winter will be severe.

Scientists, on the other hand, maintain that the color variations depend on the caterpillar's age and that older caterpillars have more reddish-brown hairs.

The woolly bear caterpillar is a native species that changes into the yellow-brown Isabella tiger moth the following spring. Its close relative, another tiger moth, is called the great or giant leopard moth (*Aeuaera pyrina*) and was introduced from Europe before 1879. Like the woolly bear, the leopard moth overwinters in caterpillar form but may come out on warm days. Covered with bristly black hairs, it reveals vivid red bands between its body segments when curled in a ball. It, too, changes into a striking moth, in this case, a white and black one with a 3-inch wingspan and an orange-marked, blue abdomen.

None of the insects I've mentioned, though, are as ubiquitous in late fall and throughout the winter as the Halloween ladybugs, especially if you live in a white, clapboard house as I do. From the moment they begin hatching in early October until the following spring, we have these ladybugs in our lives. They swarm on the veranda when they first hatch and make periodic appearances throughout the month before hibernating outdoors beneath leaf litter, under the loose bark of trees, or in clumps of grass.

But others prefer to move indoors. They are especially fond of old, white houses, probably because in eastern Asia they winter in the crevices of limestone cliffs.

This ladybug beetle species first appeared here in October of 1993 and is an Asian immigrant (*Harmona axyridis*). It arrived, probably by boat, sometime before 1988, when scientists discovered the first breeding population in St. Tammany Parish near New Orleans. By October 1994, wafted north by wind currents, the species had made it to Elmira, New York, a year after its arrival on our mountain.

Nicknamed the Halloween ladybug because of its orange color and the time of its swarming, the Entomological Society of America would like to rename it the "multicolored Asian ladybeetle." That name would emphasize its variable color scheme. Although most are yellow-orange, some are brick-red, and a few are even black with orange spots. Those ordinarily black spots not only vary in color but in numbers, rang-

ing from few or no spots to as many as 20.

The ladybugs need cool hibernating places, so those trapped in our warm living quarters won't survive, the experts say. Maybe not, but they are lively enough, flying and crawling over windows, sinks and my houseplants. Sometimes several hundred appear on our bay window, and in my husband's warm study, they swarm on every sunny day.

At first we thought they were cute, and I whimsically compared them to opossums because they roll over on their round, hard wing covers and play dead for several minutes after they are touched. Then they wriggle their legs, hoist themselves over on their stomachs and resume flying or crawling to wherever they are going. They are also prodigious predators on aphids and altogether a useful species.

On the other hand, scientists are afraid that this aggressive species will wipe out some of our native species of ladybugs. My own patience has worn thin over the past several winters as their numbers have burgeoned. Some days I vacuum them up by the hundreds, but they are quickly replaced by others.

"Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home" has become more than an old nursery rhyme to us as we fervently wish they would fly back to Asia where they came from. Instead, we watch this alien species take over our home every winter, giving us more communion with the insect world than we would like. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Lessons in Wildlife Management

Choose the correct answer for each statement then see what it spells.

____ The key to wildlife survival is: E) habitat I) hunting O) stocking.

____ Term used to describe the number of wildlife species an area can support. B) habitat needs C) predation D) carrying capacity

____ The highest wildlife populations occur in: T) spring U) summer W) winter

____ Term used to describe the transformation of a field to a forest. A) mature forest B) grasslands C) natural succession

____ Causes of wildlife deaths include: B) starvation and predation C) diseases and severe weather A) all of the above.

____ Wildlife management includes: S) no hunting. T) protecting habitat and monitoring populations U) increasing all wildlife populations.

____ Refuges are primarily to: H) protect endangered species I) provide habitat needs to increase wildlife numbers J) market and sell wildlife.

____ Animals that stay in the same general location are referred to as: M) transient N) migratory O) resident.

____ Term used to identify game animals that do not adapt to people. N) wilderness game O) migratory game P) wild game

answers on p. 64

Like fine wine, bowhunting gets better with age, culminating in . . .

The Last Two Weeks

AS I crossed the field of frozen corn stubble a cold north wind reminded me it was November and that there were only two weeks left in the 1998 archery season. The October woods were just a Technicolor memory, and the raucous cries of southbound Canada geese had long faded from the hills. The sky, painted battleship gray by an impending storm, was a foreboding partner to the knifing wind. Naked apple trees and matted fields of goldenrod replaced the bounty found here just a few weeks earlier.

It was a 10-minute walk from my parking spot along the dirt road to my treestand, and I was in a hurry. Only 12 days of archery season remained, and I still hadn't had a shot at a buck. I had no time to waste.

Covering the distance with long strides, I didn't encounter any deer on the way in. I was lucky. Under these dreary conditions deer often feed earlier than usual, and I was concerned I might encounter some on my way in. To compound matters, some encouraging deer sign appeared like magic about a hundred yards from where I was hunting, so after a morning hunt, I moved my stand to take advantage of the situation.

The line of newly rubbed trees gave me confidence I would eventually see the buck that had made the rubs. Shortly after 4 p.m., the wind tapered off enough for me to detect footsteps in the leaves behind me. Looking over my right shoulder, I saw a small buck nervously feeding on the beechnuts littering the ground behind me. Elation quickly faded to despair as the cautious buck sniffed the air more times than I thought he should. Before I could pick up my bow, his instincts, aided by a strong gust of capricious wind, caused him to flick his tail and disappear into the thick brush. I was discouraged but remained confident.

It took another week, but the site paid off. With three days of the season remaining, a 6-point, far less nervous than the buck I saw the previous week, walked nonchalantly beneath my tree. The shot was almost too easy. The buck quartered away from me heading uphill, and in short order he was mine. Dragging the buck back to the truck was a hard but satisfying chore. Stopping to take a break, I knelt on one knee and looked at the night sky. The rutting moon was about to rise.

Volumes have been written about November hunting, and for good reason. Daytime deer activity increases at this time, and if an archer hasn't scored by the end of October, the odds for tagging a deer increase with the approach of the rutting moon.

October bowhunting requires silence and stealth. In early October I hunt the food sources, and this means hunting thick

cover. Under these circumstances deer often appear out of nowhere, so remaining quiet is a must. November deer hunting requires stealth, too, but it also means taking a more active role in the hunt.

Grunting, rattling and using scents can all produce deer, providing conditions are right. Done properly, grunting can turn a deer's attention toward the hunter. Rattling can bring in bucks, provided the buck to doe ratio is high. Scents can tweak a whitetail's curiosity, so that it abandons normal caution and seeks out the ersatz suitor.

October's conventional hunting times are early morning and late afternoon, because deer focus on food and little else. Before the onset of the rut, deer move from bedding to feeding areas as daylight fades. In contrast, November bowhunting takes on a different slant, because deer are more likely to be seen throughout the day. In November, the mating instinct is the driving force behind deer movement, and it's not uncommon for a doe to be chased by buck, sometimes two, at almost any time.

Because of this increase in deer activity, a hunter should spend as much time on watch as possible. If my October deer hunting sites don't produce the desired sightings or any shooting, I begin looking for alternative areas. Deer have to be somewhere, and if I'm not seeing them I may be in the wrong location. Come November, in-season scouting is a prerequisite to success because the once secretive bucks betray their presence by rubbing trees and scraping the ground. Smart hunters take time to look for this sign. If I think a location has merit, I waste no time moving my stand or putting up a new one.

By early November, whitetail bucks roam far and wide looking for any doe coming into estrus. Overgrown fields surrounded by woods are excellent places to begin searching for sign made by rutting bucks, and for observing pre-rut deer behavior. The small saplings growing in these fields are favorite rubbing trees for bucks, so spending time scouting and developing stands in these locations makes sense. Make no mistake, bucks are still focused on food, but they may not go to the preferred food source until after dark. They are being driven by the mating urge, and smart hunters will read the sign and determine where bucks are most likely to be in the daytime.

Some may consider this heresy, but I don't put much stock in hunting areas where a buck makes a single scrape. To me a scrape indicates a buck lives in the area, but it doesn't necessarily mean he will revisit the site. If I'm going to hunt for him, I need a little more help figuring out where he is likely to be, so I can set up a stand in an appropriate location. Single scrapes seem to be just that, a one-time event made by a passing buck. In my opinion, the chance of a hunter seeing a buck refreshing any single scrape is marginal at best.

On the other hand, scrapes made in or near well-used trails connecting bedding and feeding areas bear consideration as



LOGGING ROADS or well-worn paths are favorite scrape locations, and it's not unusual to see several scrapes freshened by bucks on their way to the food source.

hunting locations. The reason is simple. Bucks will usually take the path of least resistance when moving from the bedding areas to where does are feeding, often making scrapes along the way. Abandoned logging roads or well-worn paths are favorite scrape locations, and it's not unusual to see several scrapes freshened by bucks on their way to the food source or in their search for an estrus doe.

Some sites may not look like much, but if I find an old logging road that meanders through thick woods and brush, I set a stand near the edge of the trail, especially if there are evergreen trees along the route. If a buck is going to make a scrape, then there must be a branch hanging low over the trail. After the buck paws the ground and urinates in the scrape, he will rub his head on the branch, biting off the end, allowing it to fall into the newly made scrape.

An appropriate location is one I can enter from more than one direction with a minimum of disturbance. One of my best stands is located on an abandoned logging road running parallel to the edge of a recently cleared and planted field. Tree trunks and overgrown brush block entrance to the field along most of the now unused and overgrown road. The road never fails to produce several scrapes each season. I have my stand set near one of the few breaks in the brush line where deer have access to the field. Most seasons, the spot can be counted on to produce at least one shot.

Rub lines are good locations to place a stand, provided there are three or more trees rubbed in succession. When a buck rubs a tree with his forehead and antlers, he leaves his scent behind on the tree, possibly attracting a doe in estrus. Rub lines tell me a buck is frequenting the area, and that the spot should be investigated further.

I don't get too excited about seeing a rub made in early to mid-October, because these rubs are made long before does are ready to breed. They tell me a buck passed through the area but little else. I've watched bucks rub trees in October, and it seems they do it for fun. There seems to be little aggression associated with the rubbing, and it's not anything at all like what I see in November, when bucks literally attack small trees, vigorously tearing the bark to shreds. Additionally, the rubbing tree is sometimes bent to the ground.

Rubs appearing in early November can tell the observant hunter a great deal about deer behavior. If a line of rubbed trees is found, and the raw side of the trees are facing the feeding area, then it's likely the buck doing the rubbing made the rubs in the morning on his way from the feeding area to the bedding area. If the rubs are facing thick cover, and a likely bedding area, then the rubs were most likely made in the evening when the buck left his bed for the feeding area. Either way, rub lines can tell the hunter when the best time to hunt the area might be, and they are good locations for setting up a stand for a November hunt.

Many hunters make the mistake of stubbornly sticking to an unproductive area. Deer seem to whimsically change their food preferences, and that means they may suddenly vanish from areas where they had frequently been seen. In mid-October, deer in western Susquehanna and eastern Bradford counties where I hunt are often, but not always, spotted feeding in fields of harvested corn or newly planted winter wheat.

In my opinion, too many hunters, myself included, sometimes fail to consider the importance of acorns in a whitetail's diet. We stubbornly continue hunting a spot where deer were feeding just a short time earlier. In years of abundant acorn production, deer periodically abandon traditional food preferences such as apples and corn for the more preferred acorns. Deer feed on a variety of acorns but those of the white oak are especially favored. Setting up a stand high on an oak ridge can produce shooting, especially on a frosty morning

when deer leave low lying areas for the high ground. Again, scouting is important to determine the new food source when deer disappear from their traditional early season feeding locations.

By early November, ready to breed, bucks enter the pre-rut and chasing phase of the breeding season. They spend considerable time looking for receptive does. There are several theories on predicting the onset of the rut. Moon phases, photoperiodism and falling temperatures seem to play some role in the onset of rutting activities, but the jury is still out as to the leading factor in whitetail rutting behavior. In our area, does seem to come into estrus around the second week of November, but may do so several days earlier. Regardless of the cause of rutting activity, laying a scent trail on the way to your stand is sometimes productive.

Scent trails may be especially effective when the bucks are actively chasing but not yet breeding does. Some bowhunters I know lay a scent trail by squirting a high quality buck lure on a scent pad attached to the soles of their hunting boots. Scent pads can't hurt and may even bring a buck within range, but I prefer trailing a scent rag behind me as I walk. For me this is more practical; I don't know how many scent pads I've left in the woods when they fell off my boot while walking. Commercially made kits are on the market that contain a scent rag, string, deer lure and a thick plastic bag for storage. Just be sure to use a fresh, high quality deer lure and not lure left over from the previous season.

To increase the odds for a shot, it's imperative to hunt near where the deer are. This may seem like obvious advice, but not everyone understands it. I chuckled a few years ago when a hunter told me he was seeing only does. "Every evening I see a doe and two fawns feeding near my tree," he said. "Sometimes it's two does and four fawns. Where are the bucks?"

Before the onset of the rut, bucks are more solitary and are not likely to travel with a doe and her fawns. That behavior changes in November. As the rut approaches, bucks are actively seeking does and may even be spotted feeding nearby. If I'm seeing deer, I stick to that spot like a stamp to a letter. Sooner, rather than later, a buck will appear, and I may get the shot I've waited for all season. In my opinion, all the deer lure in the world isn't as effective as a live deer. Focus on the does, and you'll find the bucks.

Due to work or family commitments, many hunters are limited to the amount of time they can spend hunting. If that is the case, being aware of when deer will most likely be moving can help fill a tag. If a period of relatively warm November weather is suddenly followed by a cold snap, get to your stand. It seems rutting and feeding are enhanced by a big change in temperature.

Deer often feed in the middle of the day when the weather changes or a storm threatens. The exception to this is when high winds accompany the weather change, or when there is a period of heavy rain or snow. Deer movement also increases after the storm passes and more stable weather returns, so keep a close ear to the weather report and hunt accordingly. If the does are moving and feeding, you can rest assured the bucks will be, too. With the approaching rut, bucks often move around at midday, so remaining in a stand for as long as possible can produce shooting.

Finally, remember nothing curtails deer activity more than the presence of humans. If small game hunters, ATV riders or hikers suddenly frequent the area you hunt, look for another location. There is nothing like hunting undisturbed deer in their natural habitat.

Bowhunting in November is the most exciting time to hunt whitetails, and the odds are stacked more in the hunter's favor than at any other time. When one of my friends says, "only two more weeks," I know my fortunes in the deer woods are likely to change. □

In the 1950s and '60s it was rare to see deer and bear hunters with scopes on their rifles. Now it's rare to see a hunter toting a rifle with iron sights. Here's the lowdown on modern . . .

Scopes & Reticles

LEGEND has it that Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) of Law of Gravity fame, and Frederick the Great (1712-1786), King of Prussia, had some association with a type of optical sight. The devices used might not have been similar to the modern riflescope, but it does prove that some shooters were tinkering with a type of optical sight more than two centuries ago.

We also know that scientists were experimenting with magnifying lenses around 1200. In 1608, Hans Lippershey, a Dutch optician, created the first telescope, followed two years later by the Italian astronomer Galileo, whose scientific work with his telescopes brought him fame. It's true that most of his instruments were of low power and small field of view. His most powerful telescope magnified 33 times, and its field of view was roughly one-quarter of the moon.

There were problems with these telescopes, but the die was cast. One of the problems was seeing the object upside down and from left to right. As you well know, that's no problem when looking at celestial objects, but image trying to get a rib cage shot on a running deer. Fortunately, in a modern riflescope, the erecting lenses reverse the reversed image.

I mentioned that Newton and Frederick each used some type of optical device, but it's speculated that their optics were just tubes without lenses. With just tubes, there would be no magnification, but the shooter's optical acuity would be concentrated in the tube and this would actually make the target appear somewhat sharper. The reason for this is that concentrating the shooter's vision in a tube and shielding the aiming device (reticle) from random light changes would enable him to be more precise. More importantly, the use of these sights proves some shooters of that era realized a good aiming device was needed for long range shooting.

It doesn't make much difference when the true riflescope came along; the truth is that it failed to be an overnight success. It's also true that



SCOPES have sure come a long way. The 6-24x Bausch & Lomb scope shown here has a ScopLevel that allows the shooter to see if the rifle is canted.

the riflescope has made open sights virtually obsolete for hunting purposes. I recall in the late 1940s and early 1950s how unusual it was to see a scope on a big game rifle. Iron or open sights such as the reliable "V" type or full "buckhorn" rear sight adorned the majority of bear and deer rifles in Pennsylvania.

In the mid-1950s a friend received a Remington 760 Gamemaster .30-06, and when I asked him if he intended to put a scope on it he looked at me with disbelief. "Do you think for a minute I would give up a good set of open sights for a scope?" he said.

To some extent that feeling still prevails with some hunters, but nothing like it was directly after World War II, when the scope was still considered an unreliable "gadget." My neighbor in the 1950s, who missed a standing deer at approximately 250 yards, had a 4x Weaver scope installed on his .270 Model 70 Winchester. While we were examining his new purchase, he admitted that he had serious doubts about his decision. Money was fairly tight at the time, and he was concerned about wasting more than $50 for a scope.

I have to admit that even as late as 1960, the riflescope was not free from problems in the field. Fogging was the constant fear. Hunters handled their scoped rifles almost with kid gloves. They went to extremes to protect the scope from bumps and jars. It was generally believed that even a light bump would either damage the scope or knock it out of alignment. It's true that a sharp blow might have damaged a scope or destroyed its sight-in, but merely bumping into a tree or some other object had no adverse impact on scopes of that era.

The main fear of scope users was being unable to see through their scope when the moment of truth arrived. They emphatically claimed open sights were faster than the riflescope, but that is not true. Here's why. When using open sights, there are three factors involved: the rear sight, front sight and the target, and they are not the same distance from the eye. The eye is unable to focus at three distances simultaneously. The eye tires quickly under strain and, when the shooter spends too much time trying to get a sight picture, starts to blur. It's not unusual for a hunter to fire without being precisely sure of his or her sight picture.

A scope takes the guesswork out of aiming. With a properly mounted scope that is focused for the user's eye, precise bullet placement is possible. There is no eyestrain, and to the hunter the reticle (aiming device in the scope) and the target appear as part of the same image, both in sharp focus for the shooter's eye.

What makes a scope superior to metallic sights? There are number of reasons, but magnification probably heads the list. Proper magnification permits the shooter or hunter to see the target clearly and in sharp detail. A scope should never be used as a substitute for a binocular, though. Trying to identify an object by looking through the rifle's scope is a dangerous practice. After a hunter is absolutely sure the target is game, the scope can be used either to make certain the target is legal game or to take the shot.

Magnification may lead the list on why a scope is superior to open sights, but coming in a close second is the reticle. The reticle is one of the most overlooked aspects of shooting. From my point of view, after more than 40 years of shooting and testing scopes, I'm convinced the reticle is every bit as important as the scope's magnifying ability. Remember, a properly mounted and adjusted scope is an extension of the shooter's own optical system.

For instance, the target and aiming point are always in focus with the shooting eye. The reticle appears implanted on the target, and the hunter can select the exact impact point. Another plus is that the scope's field of view allows the shooter to see as much below the reticle as above it. All of these benefits are lacking with open sights. When we come right down to

it, just being able to see clearly justifies the scope sight for hunting.

I don't intend to dwell on the nomenclature of a scope. A question that I am asked many times each year is "How much of a difference is there among scopes?" Without going into boring detail, the answer is, a lot. Not all scopes are equal in quality or performance.

A scope is an optical instrument, and its quality is determined mostly by its manufacturer's desire for optical excellence. There are optical problems called aberrations (about six of them) that must be corrected or eliminated before a scope can boast "optical excellence." Maybe I can put it this way. The excellence of a scope's optical system, which is definition of the target, depends upon the maker's ability to produce an optical instrument suited for an intended purpose.

By this time, it's pretty obvious that there are many complexities in making a high quality scope, and it's reasonable to assume that "all that's bright is not right." Taking a 15-second look through a scope proves nothing. Practically any scope on the market today shows a bright and enlarged image, but that's not the whole picture (pardon the pun). To my way of thinking, it takes about five years of hunting and plenty of shooting to truly reveal the quality of a scope.

I mentioned the importance the reticle plays in all types of shooting. It's not just a gadget stuck in the scope; it plays a significant role in how well we shoot, and that is doubly true for the hunter. Early reticles were simply crosshairs or posts. Most shooters and hunters are familiar with the crosshair, but the post is a throwback from the past. The post reticle was highly recommended by gun writers through the 1930s. There was nothing wrong with that, because the post has several features not found with crosshairs. I've had thin crosshairs that seemed to fade out, especially on a dark target. Because the post is somewhat like the blade on the front sight, it can be used to good advantage with the 6 o'clock hold. Allowing just a thin white line between the bottom of the bullseye and the top of the post permits the shooter to see the target clearly. It's exactly the same sight picture the military used with open sights when I took basic training in 1942. Because a post can be canted, the addition of a horizontal crosswire practically eliminated that problem. However, the reticle won the battle so to speak, because it has more going for it.

I guess I shouldn't overlook the dot reticle. It's simply a round dot determined in size by how much area it covers (subtends) at 100 yards. Without getting involved in dot specifications, I know that most hunters (especially big game hunters) use dots that are too small. I have a 1/8-inch dot in a scope I intended to use for hunting squirrels. On the range, there were no problems, but I had nothing but problems in the woods. I could see the squirrel but not the dot. When I switched to a scope with a 1-inch dot (covers one inch at 100 yards and only ½-inch at 50 yards), I started putting squirrel meat in the freezer. Big game hunters should stick with dots three inches or above. Varmint hunters cannot successfully use dots below 1/4-inch, and going up to a 1/2-inch will work even better.

Some reticles today have rangefinding capabilities. The 4-16x Schmidt & Bender varmint scope has an ingenious design. This sophisticated reticle has both crosshairs and a series of dots going down from the main center dot. It even has two windage-type dots. To use this reticle, hold dead on at 100 yards with the center dot, and then fire several 3-shot groups with each dot (holding that dot in the center of the bullseye) at the same 100-yard target. This will show how high each dot impacts at 100 yards, and knowing the muzzle velocity of the load will permit the shooter to compute the actual range for each dot. No more guesswork on long, long shots. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

North Dakota's spring ruffed grouse population was down approximately 29 percent compared to 1999, according to the 2000 drumming survey. It's likely the 2000 drumming results signal the beginning of a downward trend in the 10-year cycle. The last population peak was in 1999 and the last low in 1993.

Brood-route surveys in South Dakota indicate the state's pheasant population this season is similar to last year, which was slightly more than six million birds.

Among the 15 states with the highest homicide rates, 10 have restrictive or very restrictive gun laws. Twenty percent of U.S. homicides occur in four cities with just six percent of the population — New York, Chicago, Detroit and Washington DC — and each has a virtual prohibition on private handgun ownership. New York City has one of the most restrictive gun laws in the nation, yet 20 percent of the nation's armed robberies occur there.

Hunters in Ontario, Canada, took 1,934 turkeys during the 1999 spring season. The province's first turkey season was held in 1987. Most of southern Ontario is now open to spring turkey hunting.

Thought to be extinct in the wild, scientists now believe that 20 to 30 South China Tigers exist in the wild; another 53 are in zoos. The rare tigers were sighted in the Hunan and Zhejiang provinces.

Rattlesnakes are not found in Europe, Africa or Asia, but every state in the U.S. except Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii and Maine has at least one species.

Feral hog populations were reported in 19 states in 1988. Currently, wild hogs are established in at least 27 states. Often found in groups, feral hogs have caused significant environmental and property damage by their characteristic rooting behavior in fields.

Pennsylvania is a leading supplier of export-grade hardwood lumber and forest products, with exports totaling $796 million.

Hunters in New York took 8,078 turkeys last fall — up from the 6,244 taken in 1998.

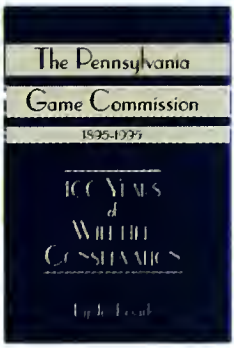
Hunters in New York took a record 256,000 deer in 1999 — up nearly 11 percent from the 231,000 taken in 1998. The '99 harvest included 125,000 antlered deer.

Pheasant numbers this season in North Dakota are significantly higher than last year, according to the 2000 ring-necked pheasant crowing count survey.

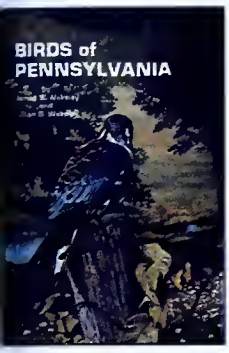
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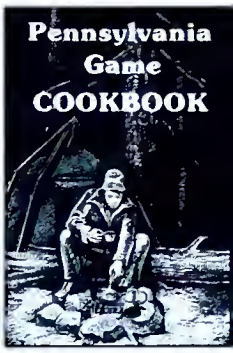
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Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, *by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.*
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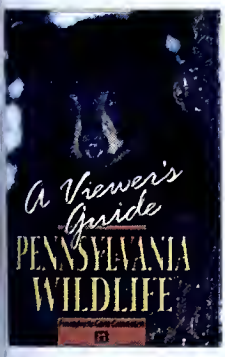
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Prices include handling and postage. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make check or money order (no cash, please) payable to Pennsylvania Game Commission and send to Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Items may now be ordered over the phone, Visa or MasterCard accepted, by calling 1-888-888-3459.

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THE WATCHER, by Marie Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



2001

The Watcher

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Volume 71 ● No. 12
DECEMBER 2000
(USPS 426180)

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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS (ISSN 0031-451X) is published monthly for $12 per year, $34.50 for three years, or membership in Pennsylvania's Cooperative Farm-Game Project or Safety Zone Project; to Canada and all other foreign countries, $13 U.S. currency, per year. Published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Phone (717) 787-4250. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, Pa. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: POSTMASTER: Send both old and new addresses to Pennsylvania Game News, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Allow six weeks for processing. Material accepted is subject to our requirements for editing and revising. Author payment covers all rights and title to accepted material, including manuscripts, photographs, drawings and illustrations. No information contained in this magazine may be used for advertising or commercial purposes. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Copyright © 2000 by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an Equal Opportunity Employer, the programs of which are all administered consistent with the goals and objectives of Affirmative Action. All rights reserved.
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editorial

Stay Tuned

AT THE REQUEST of the Board of Commissioners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Management Assistance Team conducted a comprehensive review of the Game Commission in 1998. The results of this review, known as the MAT report, was completed in August 1999. Just a couple months ago, Executive Director Vern Ross —accompanied by MAT report authors Dr. Sally Angus Guynn and Dr. Dwight E. Guynn — presented a progress report on what the agency has accomplished in meeting the recommendations of the MAT report.

The complete MAT update report can be found on the agency's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Go to "Newsroom," and then "Management Assistance Team (MAT) Update Report."

Following, however, in more general terms, are some of the highlights of what the Game Commission has done to address the MAT team recommendations:

The WCO trainee curriculum at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation has been revised to include more public relations, wildlife management, political science, marketing and other "people skills." To accommodate these additional subjects, training for the upcoming 26th class of trainees has been lengthened to up to 50 weeks.

Following a thorough review, our deputy program has been upgraded, and they now receive increased training and more frequent communications with the agency.

To further increase trust and communications within the agency, nearly all employees now have or soon will have computers that — in addition to helping them to perform their jobs more efficiently — allow them to receive news releases prior to general release and put them into more direct communications with the agency through e-mail.

Opening up more direct lines of communications between the Game Commission and the public is, perhaps, the agency's greatest achievement over the past year or so. Toll-free phone numbers have been re-established in the six region offices. The agency's website is continually being updated and refined to provide as much and as timely information as possible. And a correspondence tracking system has been implemented to assure people who write the Game Commission receive a timely response.

The addition of a press secretary to the executive office staff has resulted in much more news getting out, and to a much wider audience. The number of news releases produced has almost doubled, and by using e-mail, the cost to distribute news releases has been cut dramatically. In addition to producing more news releases, the Game Commission has used open houses and call-in programs as other ways to encourage communications between the agency and the public.

As Dr. Sally Guynn stated when the update to the MAT report was presented, "the road to organizational effectiveness is truly a journey, not a destination." The Game Commission is not through with the MAT report.

E-commerce, the hiring of a strategic planner, and an evaluation of the agency's overall organizational structure, are just a few of the areas still being worked on.

Obviously, much is still in the works to make the Pennsylvania Game Commission the best state wildlife agency it can be in the coming months, years and decades. Stay tuned. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

We all recognize WCOs, policemen, firemen and others by their uniforms. The nonhunting public also recognizes hunters by the "uniforms" we wear. When you go to a supermarket, restaurant or other public place while wearing hunting garb, what do people think of you? Are you courteous or do you use foul language and brag about what you've killed?

It takes only one such person to turn a nonhunter into an anti-hunter. A recent poll indicates more than 80 percent of all Pennsylvanians approve of hunting, providing it's done ethically and within the law.

When you are out in public, wear your uniform proudly, but remember that you represent nearly one million others.

C. Hammer
HTE Instructor
North East

Editor:

Duane Diefenbach's "How Many in the Bag" indicated that it costs $14 to raise and release a pheasant, and that about half are taken by hunters.

I don't think that amount is too high, and I think a 50 percent return is a great success, not a failure. Contrary to what the author concludes, I think late season pheasant releases should not be stopped.

This is a great time to be afield, and with the late season now running into February, more birds should be stocked, not less.

J. Ostrum,
Wilkes-Barre

Editor:

I read with interest Mr. B. Long's letter regarding Quality Deer Management in the March issue. Although I now live in Arkansas, I am still familiar with the deer situation in PA from growing up there and still visiting my family (and maintaining my *Game News* subscription).

Arkansas's deer management program is designed to do two things needed for a higher quality deer herd here: greatly increase the harvest of does and increase the age of harvested bucks.

Our 3-point rule is intended to protect yearlings, which are usually spikes, forkhorns or small 6-points. The first hunting season of our program saw a great reduction of the buck harvest, as a result of letting the little ones walk. Many will now become 8- and 10-points and show up in future harvests.

The most important result of our program change was the very large increase in doe harvest. I know that this is something the Pennsylvania Game Commission is working hard toward achieving also, and is, therefore, trying to implement "quality deer management" as Mr. Long requests.

All deer hunters should note that both of these elements of quality deer management (passing up small bucks and harvesting more does) are objectives to which each and every deer hunter has the individual opportunity to contribute in one way or another. I encourage Mr. Long and all other PA deer hunters to support the PGC in its deer management program, especially in the need to harvest more does.

S. C. Yaich,
Assistant Director
Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
Little Rock, AR

Editor;

Your short stories are excellent in both content and variety. I'm most impressed by the knowledge and thoroughness of the female writers. I suggest that you more often include a question and answer section like Bryce Hall's "The Buck Stops Here," in the August issue. I also suggest that we start encouraging hunters to take only the most mature bucks. The strategy seems to be working with "catch and release" regulations for bass fishing.

W. Vockrath,
Harrisburg

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.


Stan Beloncis

As the years go by, hunting becomes more than seeking game. It becomes a search for answers, a need to pass on all the deep-seated meanings of the outdoor heritage to future generations.

The Old Guy on the Hill

By Jim Fitser

IT'S A GOOD STAND for deer hunting. From the top of the hill along the old, one lane township road one can literally see for miles. Fields, broken by woodlots, swamps and brush patches, stretch for hundreds of yards. This is a good spot to stand if you have the patience. Sometimes it's not necessary to stand there more than a half hour into the season. Sometimes, you can stand there from dawn until sunset and not see so much as a chickadee, although such days are extremely rare. The stand suited the old guy who chose to stand on the hill.

Fifteen or so years ago, in his early 60s, the "old guy" was in a little better physical condition, and he ranged from the top of the hill to other parts of the area, walking across the field to the far stone wall to the south, or down the hill to the woods or the swamp to the east. Sometimes he would walk to the west, over the hill and down to the bottom woods to push out deer to his older son, who usually preferred to sit in the pine woods above the field dividing that spot and the lower woods.

He had no problem walking 15 or even 10 years ago. But 45 years of climbing poles and towers, and crawling around in the anthracite mines of northeastern Pennsylvania, doing his job as a heavy construction electrician, eventually took their toll. It was a real struggle now to walk even on the road for just a few yards. So he would pull his pickup into the edge of the farmer's field (with permission from the understanding landowner). He could then exit his truck and shuffle about 15 feet to the clump of trees where he would stand and begin his patient watch. It was a good spot for the old guy on the hill.

His younger son had firmly tied a 2x4 across the small tree trunks at perfect rifle-rest height for long shots. The younger son had taken many deer from this spot over the years — a few bucks and more than a dozen does. The old guy sometimes stood with his younger son, and on occasion they would each take a deer in doe season when a group would stop within sight and shooting distance. The old guy began to speak of perhaps hanging up his rifle for good — but his sons would hear none of that. They insisted he would be there if they had to push him around in a wheelchair.

As long as he could shoot, and there was no question about his ability with a rifle, his sons insisted he continue sharing in the lifelong annual

tradition of deer season. His prowess with his .30-06 was known among the locals, who many times over the years had witnessed his accuracy anywhere from 50 to more than 300 yards on deer, whether they were standing or running. Rarely did he need a second shot.

The opening day of buck season found the old guy on the hill, waiting for first light. The weather was comfortable for this time of year — not the usual snow squalls, driving sleet or freezing rain. A little snow cover would have been welcome, but the old guy was thankful for the decent weather, even with the frequent but not unbearable wind. His younger son was unable to hunt because of an injury. His older son was over the hill to the west, in his favorite opening day spot in the pine woods.

Shortly after starting time the shots began to resound off the mountain sides and across the fields dividing the patches of woods, swamps and dense brush patches so common in northern Luzerne County. Four deer came from the lower woods, crossed the field and stopped at the stone wall to check out the pine woods before entering. They were no more than five yards from the old guy's son, but they had no idea he was standing there against a pine tree along the stone wall. The light wind was in his face and the four doe passed by him without so much as a hint of a raised flag.

Across the township road was a patch of mixed hardwoods, pines, and a small swamp at the lower end. For 40 years the old guy and his sons had hunted these woods during small game seasons. Now the deer used these woods for both bedding and corridors to surrounding cornfields. Gary, one of the owners, was on his stand in those woods, once his grandfather's. These woods were special to Gary, a tie to the past. Somewhere just after 7:30 there was a lone shot from where Gary was likely posted. Nothing crossed the road into the stand where the old guy's son waited. Usually the deer came directly across the road and into these woods within five minutes or less. Today, it didn't happen. Perhaps Gary got his buck.

As the light gradually increased it became a bit easier to see in the pine stand. For some reason, whenever he sat or stood in this patch of woods, the old guy's son found he thought more and more about the philosophical aspects of life over the years — more so than the taking of game. Although that was always present, somewhere in the deeper recesses of his mind. There was always the preference for venison over beef, given the option. And fresh venison liver, smothered in onions and mushrooms and fried in garlic butter was hard to beat.



Four more deer — a doe, a yearling and two fawns — approached from the west, crossed the field, and stopped at the stone wall before entering the pines. Again, no buck, but shots continued to ring out from every direction. Years of hunting here, with careful attention to

what happened when activity erupted in specific spots, taught the old guy's son what to expect. His dad had taught him that observation was the key to learning and success, not only in hunting, but in life as well. If deer were headed this way, he knew just how long it would take them to reach this heavily used crossing area. Over the years he had taken nine or 10 bucks within a 50-yard radius of the center of the pines. They ranged from four to 10 points, all typically big "farm" deer in spite of their being 1½-year-old animals. His thoughts turned to his father, and he wondered if any of the shots he'd heard from the east were his.

The old guy on the hill also had seen many deer the first hour or so, but no bucks. The lay of the land sometimes made it difficult to tell just how far away a shot was when fired. When there was a wind, as there was on and off this day, judging distance became even more difficult. The old guy hoped at least one of the shots he'd heard from the west was his son's. It was now 9:30 and the shooting had decreased considerably over the past half hour.

His son decided to work his way up to his truck for a cup of coffee and then over the crest of the hill to check on his father, hoping one of the shots he'd heard was the old guy's. As he reached his truck, he noticed Gary was also at his vehicle parked in a small pull-off from the dirt road.

Gary had knocked down a spike at 7:30, but it immediately jumped back up and mixed in with the 12 does running with it. He was unable to get off another shot without possibly hitting one of the does, and then had spent more than an hour trying to find some evidence of a fatal shot. He found nothing of consequence and decided the buck was not seriously hit. He was getting ready to leave because of a prior appointment.

The old guy's son made his way to his father's stand. Jesse, a local resident, pulled up to the top of the hill to show the old guy and his son the buck he had taken at 7 o'clock near a spot known as the shale pit. It had an unusual set of antlers — very close together, almost straight up, with more than a half-dozen points and some broken off. Jesse had himself a rather unusual trophy, and a good bit of venison because the buck was big.

Gary drove down the road and stopped to chat a bit with the old guy, while Jesse spoke to his son, telling him about the 4-point he had seen out in the grassy field several times during the fall turkey season. He no sooner got the words out when a shot rang out from the woods at the bottom of the hill. Jesse looked at the old guy's son and told him he better get his father over there to his rifle.

The old guy hobbled across the road, picked up his rifle, and looked toward the woods and the pond at the bottom of the hill. His son stood next to him, Jesse a few yards behind them, and Gary sat in his car anticipating the action. A buck broke from the woods at the bottom, turned up the hill and started running across the field on an angle away from the old guy.

His son said, "It's a buck, Pop. Take him!"

The old guy squeezed off a shot as the buck ran up across the field nearly 150 yards away. The deer dropped in its tracks at the crack of the Remington 700. The old guy watched a few seconds, then looked at his son. Jesse shook his head.

"Maybe he can't walk very good, but he sure as heck can still shoot," Jesse said as he looked at Gary and then the old guy's son. Jesse told the old guy to drive to the bottom of the hill and they would get the buck and drag it out to the road. The old guy's grin was something to behold. He'd made a fine shot and done it in front of several witnesses to boot. He had reason to be proud, but he didn't boast — that was not his nature.

At the bottom of the hill the old

guy insisted that he had to field-dress the heavy 4-point himself. The buck was tagged, cleaned and loaded into the back of the old guy's truck, and his son told him to be on his way. "Get it to the butcher shop, because the weather isn't that cold — you don't want it to spoil," he told his father. The old guy thanked Jesse for his help (this wasn't the first time Jesse helped the old guy take care of a deer), wished his son good luck and drove off down the road.

The remainder of buck season wasn't productive for the old guy's son. He saw plenty of deer but no buck. He looked forward to the first day of the doe season. His father would be back on his stand on top of the hill before daylight, and he would be back at his in the pines, although closer to the dirt road this time, because Gary had warned him about the "7:30 a.m. train," as he called the herd of deer he saw several mornings during buck season. The old guy's son knew exactly where they'd cross the road if they ran to the south. He was ready, but the train never arrived.

Monday morning brought good fortune to the old guy on the hill, however. At 7:30 two does ran from the brush patch at the bottom of the hill, crossed the dirt road and headed for the woodlot, but they made a mistake, they stopped below the pond before entering the woods, as they usually did. The old guy picked the larger of the two doe, squeezed off a shot and saw one deer bolt into the woods. He couldn't see the other one, and thought perhaps he had missed and simply didn't see that one run when the rifle recoiled.

He drove to the bottom of the hill, and his son's best friend and hunting partner, Jim, came out of the woods near the pond. After the old guy tagged it, Jim dragged the huge doe out to the road where the old guy once again performed the cleaning chore, and then they loaded it into his truck. His shot was close to 250 yards, but his son, who made his way over the hill when he heard the shot, chided his father because the deer wasn't running when he shot. The old guy took the good-natured ribbing, and then offered to buy his son and Jim breakfast. They took him up on the offer. Although an hour or so out of the woods would cut down on their chances to get a deer, the time spent in fellowship over a much welcomed breakfast was more than worth it: Fellowship is an important part of any hunt.

After breakfast the old guy was once again sent on his way to take his deer to be processed. His son and Jim spent the rest of the day back in the woods but were not successful. They planned to meet on top of the hill before daybreak the next morning, when they would decide on their plans for the day.

The next morning the old guy's son waited until long after daybreak for his friend Jim. He never showed up. Apparently his back problem had gotten worse during the night — hopefully that and not some misfortune along the road during the nearly 2-hour drive from Chapman Quarries in Northampton County.

The old guy's son stood at his father's stand on the hill. There was very little shooting compared to the day before. He thought about going to his stand in the pines over the hill, but for some reason, he didn't. There wasn't even any traffic on the dirt road that normally saw at least a half dozen cars or trucks with hunters moving from one location to another to set up drives. Even Jesse and his family hadn't been by. The old guy's son decided his father's spot was as good as any, so he stayed put. His mind wandered.

He thought about his new grandson Derek and how, when he held him, the baby would look at him intently when he told of past events and the wonders of the

outdoors he hoped to have the chance to pass on to him. Some day he would tell Derek the story the old guy on the hill related to him many years earlier. About the ancient tribe whose custom it was for the eldest son to carry his father to the top of the highest hill when he was no longer able to care for himself. There his obligation was to leave his father. One day a young man took his fragile, sickly father to the top of the mountain and set him down. The old man had tears in his eyes.

"Why are you crying, Father?" the young man asked. "You know this is the way of our people. Please don't make this harder for me."

The old man looked at his eldest son through clouded eyes and said, "I do not weep for myself. I know my time has come. But I am sorrowful because I know that some day you will be brought here to the hill by your son and left to die." With that the son picked up his father and forever changed the ways of ancient times for his tribe. Never again would the old be left alone on top of the hill.

At 8:15 a volley of shots across the fields to the south, near the shale pit, brought the old guy's son back to reality. Within three or four minutes, at the far end of the field to the west, coming from the pines where the old guy's son normally stood, came a group of deer. They stopped on the first knoll and looked toward Gary's woods. Gary was in there, at his spot on the old crumbling foundation of what was once his grandfather's cabin — his lucky spot. The deer, 10 in all, avoided the woods and began a mad dash the entire length of the field on a path that would take them right past the old guy's son, about 75 yards away.

They continued on and then angled away toward the far corner. The old guy's son picked out the lead doe in his scope, and thought he heard a voice say, "Take him, son." He squeezed the trigger. She dropped in her tracks, and the rest of the deer fled to the far corner of the field, stopped at the stone wall, then jumped across it and headed back toward the general direction of the shale pit. As he stood over the deer, everything was silent again. He looked back to where he'd been standing on the top of the hill and thought he saw an old man with a young boy next to him. He blinked and they were gone.

After tagging and field-dressing the big doe, he slowly dragged it downhill across the field to the road. His truck was parked over the top of the hill, and while he stood contemplating whether he should leave the deer and go for his truck, Jesse and his family came along.

Jesse told his son and nephew to throw the deer in the back of the truck, then drove it and the old guy's son to his truck. These people are the epitome of sportsmen. They were on their way to put on a drive, but changed their mind when the old guy's son told them about the deer that headed back toward the shale pit.

They had no luck finding the deer, though, and about an hour later the old guy's son met up with them along the highway where they were planning a drive. He stopped to talk to them and offered to help with the drive. During the course of the conversation, Jesse's Uncle John said, "What happened to the old guy who usually posts on the hill? I didn't see him there this morning."

Jesse looked at the old guy's son and smiled then replied to his uncle, "The old guy got his doe at 7:30 yesterday morning, and he got a nice buck the first day, too. He doesn't fool around when he gets his chance. He can barely walk but he sure can shoot."

Jesse looked at the old guy's son — and I just nodded and smiled back at him. I thought of my grandson and hoped some day he would hear someone refer to me as "the old guy on the hill." □



My First Smokepole Season

By Fr. Bill Haslett

KARL and I were in the woods early. We met about daybreak, in the corner of a huge field above his cabin, where three different farms converge. The winter view is really stunning from there. Turning south and west one looks down into the dark, mysterious trees bending heavily under the new wet snow. North and east are the rolling fields into which the blustery winter wind has carved large, swirling patterns across the bright, virgin snow. It was the second week of our traditional flintlock deer season and — as January normally is in the Laurel Highlands — it was around the zero degree mark and the wind chill made it feel much colder. Sitting in the warm truck, we finished a cup of hot coffee and discussed our strategy.

We began that morning with a maneuver we often use in these woods. Karl would work his way into the woods along the upper road, and after moving about 150 yards or so, would angle to his right and drive the area just below the cabin. Deer love to bed down in the thick underbrush and saplings in this area. I would walk out across the field, past the pond and down a small logging road. Most of my walk would keep me out of and above the treeline until the final 40 or so yards, where my path would bring me to a spot with an elevated view of the far end of the thicket Karl would be driving.

Trying to walk quietly was extremely frustrating that morning. With each step the icy crust would give way, and I almost started laughing when I thought that every deer in Somerset County could hear me walking. Add to this the fact that it was my first season hunting with a muzzleloader, and I was as excited as a 12-year-old on his first buck season. Late in the summer and all through the fall I had shot more than a pound and a half of powder to get ready for this season, attempting, as any neophyte smokepoler must, to not flinch when the pan ignites.

I had missed a doe only the day before from roughly this same spot, because I got too excited and didn't hold steady during ignition. Now, I've had good luck taking deer during the past 19 seasons, but this season was making me feel like a kid again, learning to hunt all over, and I couldn't get enough.

At any rate, having finally reached my perch above the thicket, I sought shelter from the frigid winds sweeping in from the fields behind the crest of a small hill. I scanned and scanned but saw nothing. After about five minutes huge snowflakes began to fall. After about 10 more minutes I saw Karl's bright orange vest breaking through the cover. It had been impossible to hear him moving, even in the snow and ice, because of the howling wind. He had just begun to angle up toward me when he suddenly stopped. Even at that distance I could tell it was an "I think I see a deer" stance.

Karl dropped to one knee and raised the 50-caliber Hawken to his shoulder. I strained to see into his sight

path but, as luck would have it, the only hemlock tree in that part of the woods blocked my view. I saw the lock of his rifle at full cock and then saw the pan flash, but did not hear the rumbling *boom*. Without breaking his stance, Karl reprimed the pan and this time the charge sent the home-swagged ball downrange with its familiar and awesome thunder/fire/smoke sequence. I could now move slightly uphill to see around the hemlock tree. At about 75 yards, running straight away from me were two big does. Not having a clear shot, I simply enjoyed watching their graceful movement through the deep snow.

Karl and I walked to where the deer had been when he fired and found no signs of a hit. At that point we decided to circle out across the top of the treeline back to the truck and a warm cup of coffee, and another strategy session.

We decided to hunt at the Mountain Field and Stream Club grounds, which sit majestically above and astride the Allegheny Tunnel on the PA Turnpike. I'm privileged to be sponsored by Karl to join this club, which offers more than a thousand acres of land, a rifle and trap range, picnic ground and beautiful log club house. Karl and his brother, Bob, and their families are lifelong members of the club, and the rich heritage of hunting, shooting and family time spent afield there is inspiring. Being a transplant to Somerset County, with a deep love of the outdoors and shooting sports, I was truly touched and excited to be invited to earn my membership in this close knit family of sportsmen. This is a place where young people are taught respect for and conservation of our precious natural resources. This is evident to anyone who cares to notice the big sign in the clubhouse that reads: Animals use only what they need — why can't you? There is reciprocity between the land and the men and women here under which each party gives back as much as what is received. I was being welcomed into this new group as well as into the smokepole fraternity. It was like Christmas all over again.



Karl and I reached the powerline high above the tunnels sometime after lunch. After placing our rifles outside to acclimate to the cold and minimize moisture on the pans, we ate a quick lunch. Finally, we jumped out of the warm truck, loaded our guns, and decided to split up and work through some thick laurel that headed down into a draw. The snow and ice here on the summit of the mountain was at least 12 to 18 inches deeper than where we had hunted in the morning. In some places the snow had drifted to four and five feet deep. I'm 5-8 standing straight up before I get a haircut, so it was enough of a challenge simply to keep the lock and pan dry and out of the chest-deep snow. As in the morning, I started to chuckle with each

step, which made wading even more difficult. I made it to my assigned spot, pushed my heart back into my chest, and waited only a few minutes before I saw Karl working his way towards me. He hadn't seen a thing either.

A walk that would normally have taken us 20 minutes had taken more than an hour. It was getting late now and we were pretty tired. "I want to try one more place before we quit," Karl said as we headed back up the steep hill. We walked a couple hundred yards up a logging road, crossed the powerline and continued over the mountain.

The view down toward Bedford County was breathtaking. Then we saw them. Seven does about 150 yards up ahead on the road were walking directly toward us. We were downwind of them and relatively concealed around a bend in the road. I knelt down as far left as I could to give Karl the first shot because this was the best opportunity he had had all season, and I had taken a doe in the regular antlerless season. Karl pulled up, took aim at the big lead doe and, just as I heard the lock click, the pan ignited. The deer turned abruptly downhill and picked up speed. It was then that Karl said, "Pan ignites, darn, boom, tree." I missed one, too. We walked up the road to check again for hits, and Karl got another snap shot at a doe hiding on a small bench below us.

It was then that I began to laugh. Karl, at first, thought I was laughing at his missed shot. "Look back at where we shot from," I said, which was easily visible in the snow. We turned just in time to see the "boom tree" hesitate slightly and then fall over, shot perfectly through the center by his 50-caliber round ball. When I, between guffaws, recounted the sequence of the darn boom tree to him, he said, "Yeah, just as I swung the rifle to follow the deer I saw the tree in the sight path, but it was too late." True enough, at least for the tree, that is.

As we stood back and admired the Creator's handiwork all around us we both agreed that ending the day with two unfilled tags was okay.

As we stood back and admired the Creator's handiwork all around us we both agreed that ending the day with two unfilled tags was okay. The shared time between friends in a wonderful, traditional season, the blessing of having such a marvelous place to enjoy our sport and, of course, the memory of the darn boom tree made the season everything we would ever want. □

Cover Painting by Mark Anderson

IT'S WHAT YOU'VE waited for all year — opening day — and you've thought about and planned for this since just about the close of last season, anticipation intensifying when the autumn leaves got that first tinge of color. You've watched this one picking its way ever so slowly through that thicket in the background, cautiously sniffing at every gentle breeze in the cold morning air, and now, after what seemed like an eternity, he's stepped into the open. The moment of truth has arrived, but he knows something is not quite right; you don't have a second to spare. Place the crosshairs on the shoulder and squeeze . . .

The Rachel Carson Suite

By Dan Brauning
PGC Biologist

A STEELY STREAK across the sky explodes into a shower of feathers. The woodcock does not drop into a meadow; no gunshot was heard. Instead, the *beep-beep-beep* of a truck backing up, the *screeeeech* of train wheels against the track, and high in the air the *cack-cack-cack* of a peregrine falcon is heard. A male falcon snatches the falling bird from the air and delivers it to a waiting female on a ledge of the 15th floor of the Rachel Carson Building in downtown Harrisburg. It's spring, 1996, and the skies over Harrisburg, not to mention the lives of many wildlife enthusiasts, will never be the same.

The pair of peregrines found their way to Harrisburg during the late winter months of 1996. First, a lone female was observed around the city. By March, a pair was seen darting through the skies, and remains of pigeons, songbirds and, yes, woodcock, were found on window ledges and streets of Pennsylvania's capital city. Neither bird was part of the Game Commission's peregrine reintroduction in Harrisburg and other Pennsylvania cities during the 1990s. The male was unbanded, and the leg bands on the female traced her to a nest site the previous year on the National Shrine in Washington DC. She was too young to nest during her first year here, but great hopes were raised that Harrisburg would have falcons nesting, and be among the many cities that contributed to a dramatic national recovery of this noble bird.

The peregrine falcon, widely considered the world's fastest flying bird, and the choice bird of falconry, had declined precipitously in the U.S. and around the world. DDT was the primary culprit. But then, with federal and state protection, and the banning of DDT in North America, the stage was set for a dramatic comeback of this and other endangered birds.

The Peregrine Fund, Inc., based at the time in Ithaca, New York, spearheaded the peregrine recovery by rearing young in captivity and releasing them in suitable locations across the continent. Cliffs at Dauphin and near Towanda were among the earliest release sites in the 1970s. The Game Commission played a part at each stage, and initiated its own releases during the 1990s to bolster the population then established in Pennsylvania. All told, more

Joe Kosack



ONE of the four peregrine falcon chicks that was hatched last spring in a nest on the Rachel Carson Building in Harrisburg.

than 7,000 peregrines were eventually released nationwide. This program succeeded in bringing the species back and was rewarded with removal of the peregrine falcon from the Federal Endangered Species list in 1999.

From the beginning, the peregrine recovery was closely linked to cities in the East. Urban centers were adopted by formerly cliff-nesting peregrines because they provided high ledges for nesting, isolation from predators, and abundant small to medium-sized birds preyed on by the falcons. While the falcons build no nest, they do require a base of gravel on which to lay their eggs. To provide such a nest for the newly established pair in Harrisburg, a nest tray was installed on the south-facing ledge on the 15th floor of the Rachel Carson Building. The newly established pair adopted this tray as a nest site, scraped in the gravel, and frequently was seen on window ledges around the building.

The peregrines had chosen a suitable home: The building was named after the famed opponent of DDT and author of the influential book, *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson. She had been a Pennsylvania resident. The building is now home to the Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), which readily adopted the birds as their own and made adjustments to the building to accommodate their new residents. A camera was installed above the nest ledge to broadcast images on the Internet.

The plot was developing nicely during the spring of 1998 — the new couple displaying all the normal behaviors associated with nesting. Yet, as the spring progressed and no eggs were found, it became clear that something was amiss. The web site was becoming popular, but with no eggs or young in a nest, the birds clearly were not cooperating. A futile attempt to foster a young peregrine into the nest brought to our attention that something was wrong with the resident female. Alan Pollard, a private partner in the peregrine recovery program, quickly identified her, newly in full breeding plumage, as a hybrid. The occurrence of a hybrid was quickly explained by closer examination of the pair nesting on the National Shrine, the Harrisburg female's parents. The male in that nest, her sire, carried the band of a hawk propagator and strongly suggested the hybridization of peregrine and prairie falcons, two entirely different species. Legal in captivity, it was almost unprecedented for a hybrid male to successfully breed. He apparently escaped, paired with a wild female in Washington DC and for several years had been producing offspring that genetically carried one fourth of the genes of a prairie falcon. That mix made the offspring infertile, thereby frustrating the hopes of successful nesting on the Rachel Carson Building.

In 1998 it was decided, under guidance from personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region Office in Hadley, Massachusetts, that the female must be removed from Harrisburg. This task was finally accomplished with the help of wildlife rehabilitators and equipment from a falconer experienced with trapping wild falcons. A rig was set up on the roof of the Rachel Carson Building that lured the female into spread nets. She was captured unharmed on April 28, 1999, and was taken to the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, where she joins educational forays to neighboring schools.

Removing the hybrid female from the environment was just half the challenge. The second half was up to the remaining male. But first, some background.

It's typical among wild animals for the male to select a territory and then attract a mate. So, with his loss of a mate, the male's instinct was to seek a replacement. This he accomplished in



Joe Kosack

seven days. On the very ledge, a new female was being actively courted on May 4. The web site came back to life as many gazed on this newly established pair. She was just one year old, and would not be nesting that year, but her quick arrival reflected the recovery of the population and the number of wild peregrines in the region. Further, her band identified her as coming from the Girard Point Bridge in Philadelphia the previous year. She was the first peregrine naturally raised in Pennsylvania known to set up housekeeping within the state.

The winter of 1999-2000 was relatively uneventful. Woodcock mysteriously appeared, cached on window ledges of buildings neighboring the Rachel Carson. These, and the remains of grebes, nighthawks and, of course, pigeons and starlings, were now regular decorations on rooftops and window ledges of Harrisburg office buildings.

The saga finally achieved its culmination in the spring of 2000, when the pair returned again to the ledge that for four years had been the focus of activity. This time, the "south-Philly" gal laid her first egg on March 27, with three more to follow. DEP's "Falcon Page" now included streaming video — not just still pictures — and eventually audio. A running commentary was provided, as fans from not only Harrisburg and Pennsylvania, but throughout the world, followed the progress of these nesting birds. The daily life of a pair of birds has never been scrutinized like this before. When the first egg hatched, the cyber audience documented the precise minute. Hatching eggs and young mouths to feed provided daily entertainment, and DEP's web site racked up millions of "hits."

The new mother and father proved to be diligent parents — brooding the young during the heat of the day and gently feeding small scraps to the small balls of fluff. Teachers got into the act, following the developing family with educational lessons for their classroom. The Game Commission and DEP teamed up to host a behind-the-scenes teacher workshop on April 13. Many of those educators brought their classes to the auditorium of the Rachel Carson Building for the banding of the young — the only instance in which biologists handled these wild birds alive. More than 130 students and educators from nine area schools attended the event on June 1.

Behind the scenes was a team of technical, biological and educational experts tweaking and enhancing the system, interpreting and explaining behavior, and serving the growing numbers enthralled with these remarkable birds. This network of partners, including the Game Commission, DEP, DCNR, the Environmental Fund for Pennsylvania and Commonwealth Media Services, exploited every media outlet. A live Internet-based chat included other partners, such as the Rachel Carson Homestead Foundation and the Pennsylvania Audubon Society. The banding event and short historical video may be viewed on the Greenworks.Channel.org by pointing your Internet browser to http://www.greenworkschannel.org/wildlife/falcon.htm. Dauphin County Wildlife Rescue, Rehabitat, and a host of volunteers stepped to the plate during the tenuous

days of the young birds' first flight. Monitoring every evening, they were prepared to scoop up a bird from the busy city streets if it was grounded.

The hazards of urban living were tragically bought home to all of us during the weeks following the youngs' maiden flights. The volunteer crew rescued a young female that inadvertently landed on the streets below the nest ledge, but nothing could protect the young birds from the hazards of window glass, electric power poles and other urban hazards. Three of the four young were found dead within three weeks. One at the base of a power line for the nearby train service, another on a rooftop, and the youngest female on the 4th floor sky light following a dramatic chase after a pigeon wing. These losses were a set back, but really serve as a reminder of the dangers faced daily by wildlife. Windows, power poles and guy-wires pose as unseen dangers to many forms of wildlife.

Four years in the making, the life of the Rachel Carson peregrines is a unique drama, followed by hundreds of thousands of fans via new technologies. The falcons are likely to remain in the area, we hope to nest again next year. The Rachel Carson falcons' millennium-nesting debut may be a fitting prelude to better times ahead for endangered species. Of course, the story is not finished. By March 2001 we hope that again the pair will initiate the next nesting season. Follow the story yourself, by checking into the peregrine page on the Game Commission's web site at http://www.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/PGC/wildlife/falcon/index.htm. ☐

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The Good Shot

Penn's Wood Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

TWO HUNTERS, father and son, see a deer trotting just inside the woods on the far side of a weedfield. They confirm that it is a buck and sneak ahead to look for a shooting lane, easing to a point where the field narrows to 75 yards. The son braces against a tree, and at the report from his .303 Enfield the buck bolts behind a screen of greenbriar. The young hunter has difficulty ejecting the round, and his father hurries a few steps ahead and fires his .30-40 Krag just as the buck clears the brush. The buck stumbles and plows into a snowdrift.

"Look here," said Bill, young Vic's father. "We both hit him, and only an inch apart, right through the boiler room. That was a good shot you made. I really didn't have to shoot. He would have gone down anyway."

Bill watched his son tag and field-dress the buck. It was very cold and beginning to sleet — frozen pellets like rice bouncing noisily off their stiff canvas hunting outfits.

"Mom and the girls will be surprised. They thought we were wasting our time going out on the last day of the season," said Vic.

"I'll carry the guns and you can get yourself warmed up dragging in your buck," said Bill. He slung his Krag over a shoulder and cradled the Enfield in his arm. His son's old British rifle had seen better days. He wanted to get him a new rifle for Christmas, but times were a bit lean. The Krag was in good shape and lots of guys used them in the post-Depression north country. He thought of getting the Krag sporterized for his son, which would be almost like a new gun, but more affordable.

BILL WAS A TRUCK DRIVER for a lumber mill. He enjoyed traveling the routes through the Big Woods, but driving had been difficult this fall, with successive snowstorms that began in late October. On his next run Bill took the Krag with him. He stopped at Ebby's Hardware and Sporting Goods, which he often drove by.



Ebby came out of the back room wiping his hands on a greasy leather apron. The gunsmith was an older fellow with a shock of white hair and a bushy moustache. His pale blue eyes peered at Bill over wire glasses. "Yes, sir," he said.

"I want to see about getting this Krag sporterized," said Bill. "As a Christmas gift for

my boy, if the price is in my reach."

"Let's see," said Ebby, looking at a calendar. "It's December 15, and you want this work done for a Christmas present. Why didn't you wait a little longer, until Christmas Eve? All I have to do is wave my magic wand and you could have it right then, with a big red bow wrapped around it."

"I guess I wasn't thinking," said Bill sheepishly. "I could probably give it to him for a graduation gift next spring."



Ebby inspected the Krag and did some figuring on a pad. "It'll have a 22-inch carbine length barrel, and I'll replace the military front sight with a gold bead and install a Lyman No. 34 receiver sight. I'll slick up the action and remodel the stock. Then I'll check and refinish the stock and put on a rubber butt pad. We'll take the slack out of the trigger and add a set-screw to make the pull adjustable, then fit eyes for sling hooks on the buttstock and forend band. It'll need to be reblued, too. A new leather sling will finish it out. It's gonna cost about $25 and that includes 50 rounds of ammo and sighting it in at the range out back."

I paid six bucks for that gun, Bill thought to himself. Twenty-five dollars was a lot of money. "All right. I'll let it here. I'm not local, I drive truck two counties over, but I'm through here all the time. I'll come by every once in a while to check in."

Ebby took Bill's name and number and tagged the gun while Bill browsed the aisles. The smith watched Bill take some money out of his wallet and count it carefully. Bill examined a wool coat and inspected a pair of boots, then scrutinized the knife case, reviewing his Christmas shopping aloud.

There was his youngest daughter, Penny, but Mary, his wife, had already gotten her gifts. Ellen, their older girl, needed a new winter coat, and Mary said that she would need a few more dollars for that. He and Vic had made Mary a long cherry dining table with matching benches for her empty dining room. All it needed was some final polishing, but he had to save three dollars for the Yuletide centerpiece with brass candelabra that he had laid back.

Ebby sensed what Bill was deliberating. "Look here," said Ebby, handing him a store flyer. "You might want to stop by next week when I have my holiday sale. Dollar stretches a little farther then."

VIC MET HIS FATHER at the mill after school to help with the final polishing of the furniture. When they finished they stood back and admired their work. It was more beautiful than anything they had seen in any store, and made from good Pennsylvania cherry that Bill had hauled himself.

"Vic," Bill said to his son, "you pick up that centerpiece tomorrow. Here's the three dollars I still owe on it. Bring it home and hide it in the basement."

"I'm one step ahead of you, Dad. I got it yesterday and paid for it with money from shoveling snow."

Bill smiled at his son. "I have to make a run over to Warren tomorrow morning and won't be back till late afternoon. Meet me here and we'll load up the table and benches. There's no trying to surprise her with it, but she'll be happy enough."

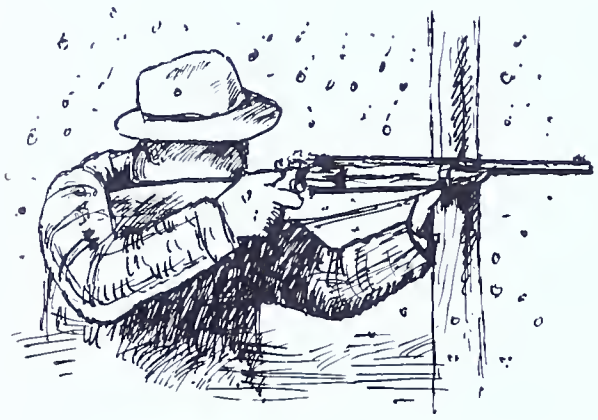
At five o'clock the next morning Bill was on the road. He was unloaded by nine and headed back with a storm at his heels. He had $14, enough for a nice pair of boots for his son and wool socks and maybe a Marble's hunting knife, too.

When he crested the hill, cars were parked all along the road. Must really be some kind of sale Ebby's having, he thought, and parked his rig far down the road. He heard gunshots from the rifle range in back of the gunshop.

Ebby was standing behind the counter talking to several men, pointing out the features on a fancy rifle. "Hey, you're the trucker, right? Bill Adams?" asked Ebby.

"Yeah," Bill said. "Just stopped by to pick up a few things for my boy."

Ebby went into the back and came out with the newly sporterized Krag. "It's all done," he said. "Finished it late last night. Looks like your boy'll have it for Christmas after all. Sighted it in early this morning, and she's dead on." Ebby handed the gun to Bill.



The ungainly military rifle was now a sleek and handsome sporter. Bill shouldered it and said, "You must have a magic wand back there somewhere, but I only have 14 bucks along, and it might take me awhile to get the rest. I'll just get him something else for now."

"Tell you what," said Ebby. "You're in the wood business. "Do you ever come across some nice walnut? Straight-grained and fancy, for gunstocks?"

"Sure, we deal in all kinds of wood," said Bill.

"How 'bout this, then," said Ebby. "You get me some walnut, and we'll forget the balance. I want it sawed into blanks, though. Don't go draggin' in some big log here. Take this gun along for your boy."

Bill shook the gunsmith's hand. "It's a deal, Ebby. Say, what's all that shootin' out back?"

"That's the fire company's annual Christmas Eve shoot. Hundreds of shooters come from all over. Grand prize is that new rifle those fellas are gawking at. Why don't you take that Krag out and give it a try? Ticket is three bucks. Register here and give the rangemaster your stub. The last flight is goin' up real soon. You better hurry."

Bill suddenly remembered the three dollars in his coat pocket that he was going to give to Vic for the centerpiece, and visions of his son toting the prize rifle loomed large. Bill Adams was a gifted rifleman — a natural shot. He paid the entry fee, and with the Krag under his arm went outside. A large crowd of shooters and spectators filled the lot, spilling over to the diner next door. When Bill got to the range the snow was falling steadily. He was the last shooter on the end bench.

The rangemaster quickly explained the rules. "We had 327, no, 328 shooters this year. Each of you has a target downrange in your lane with your number on it. There are five bulls numbered one through five on each target. You will fire five rounds, one shot at each bull. Bull one is shot from your benchrest. Two is a standing offhand shot. Three is a leaning rest against the post. Four is sitting or prone, your choice. Your target is then tacked to the running deer. The fifth shot is a standing offhand shot at the running deer. There are 10 possible points per bull, and a total perfect score of 50 points. If there's a

tie, the closest measured shot to dead center on the fifth bull wins. There's a spotter at each bench to instruct you. Targets are set at 75 yards. Good luck."

The new Krag was dead on like Ebby had said, and after the fourth bull Bill had 38 points. When the running deer slid across the range it was difficult to make out the bull through the swirling flakes. Bill thought of the buck he and his son had shot earlier, and with that image in mind, pulled the crisp trigger.

"We got a high score of 48 here, announced the rangemaster. That means we have a tie for high score of the day. There was another 48, in the second flight. Okay, here comes the measurement to center on shooter 328's target. Looks like shooter 23 was a half-inch closer. Shooter 23 is the winner."

The storm was intensifying, and Bill quickly headed for his truck. "Hey buddy," his spotter yelled. You got second place. Go in the store and pick up your prize."

Ebby was all smiles, and Bill was elated to find that second place was a new Woolrich hunting coat. "Take the size you need off the rack and hit the road," Ebby said. "This storm is a bad one."

THE RIDE HOME was treacherous, and it was after dark when Bill pulled into the mill. Vic was waiting there with the furniture already wrapped in tarps.

Mary had left a note that she and the girls were at the neighbors, and would be home shortly. They placed the furniture in the empty dining room, which had been closed off for the winter. Vic brought the centerpiece up from the basement and put it on the table. She would be surprised after all.

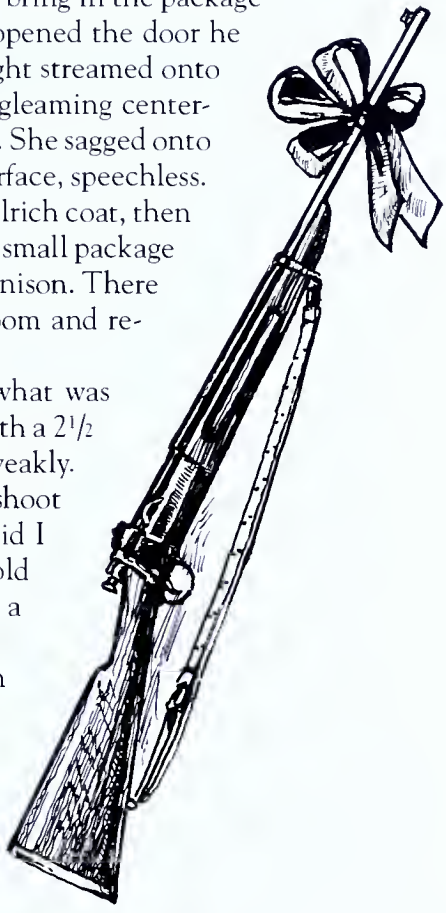
Early Christmas morning the family gathered in the front room and watched the girls open their gifts. Bill asked Mary to bring in the package he had put in the dining room for Vic. When she opened the door he heard her gasp. She flung the blinds open and sunlight streamed onto the expanse of polished wood and bounced off the gleaming centerpiece, spraying the walls with a galaxy of golden stars. She sagged onto a bench and placed her hands flat on the polished surface, speechless.

Bill handed his son the package that held the Woolrich coat, then sat next to his wife. The girls each gave their father a small package with a bow. "Merry Christmas, Daddy," they said in unison. There was a box of .270 cartridges in each. Vic left the room and returned with a long box. "This is for you, too, Dad."

Bill unwrapped the box but could not believe what was inside. It was a Winchester Model 70 Super Grade with a 2½ power Lyman Alaskan scope. "But how?" he asked weakly.

"I won it yesterday, Dad. Over at the big fireman's shoot by Warren. Nick Thomas and I went over. They said I beat another guy by a half inch. I was gonna use my old Enfield, but Ebby who owns the gunshop let me use a sporter he had in back."

Bill reached under the table and handed his son the Krag with a big red bow wrapped around the barrel. "It wasn't by any chance this gun, was it?"



Ebby looked out the window and squinted at the aftermath of the storm, and thinking of the trucker and his kid, he smiled and said, "Merry Christmas."



Doe Fever

By Don Feigert

IT WAS the fifth year that Annie and I hunted together, and one of those rare days when we planned to truly hunt together. We're both dedicated solitary hunters, but, hey, this was antlerless deer season. Why not hunt together just for fun? Why not try some different hunting grounds, too? We decided to pass on our usual deer hunting area five miles up the Allegheny River from our Warren County camp, and try the game lands mountain right behind our property. There's something special about heading out the back door and hunting without having to bother loading up vehicles.

The mountainside behind camp rises severely from the river bottom, though. Annie and I spent one full hour struggling in the darkness up the steep terrain, getting overheated and uncomfortable despite the 20-degree temperature and light, breezy snowfall.

Finally, at 6:30, we reached the crest, traveled across a plateau, then dropped down over the ridge to Connelly Run Hollow. We positioned ourselves a hundred yards apart along the mountainside and sat for a half hour, awaiting daylight. No other hunters were visible on the mountain, but we knew hunters from the camps along the river would soon work the bedding areas below and maybe push deer into our shooting lanes.

At 7:45 I spotted a small group of deer, four, no five, trotting uphill toward us, alert but not spooked, appearing and disappearing behind tree trunks, laurel, rocks and windfalls. My heart accelerated as the deer approached, and I scoped each head for antlers. All does, I decided, and they're just beyond a hundred yards. Should I shoot now or wait until they get closer? I waited and the deer veered toward Annie and vanished behind some large boulders.

A minute more and *boom* went Annie's Remington .30-06, then *boom* again, and I sprang to the ready position. One doe charged uphill toward me with a strange, clumsy gait. I got the crosshairs on it and started my trigger squeeze, but the deer dropped in the snow before I could shoot. In an instant I realized this was the deer Annie had shot, and I almost laughed, but my hunter's reflexes swung on another doe dashing broadside on the slope below. I took one extra second to get the crosshairs squarely on its chest, squeezed, and the deer folded and skidded to a stop.

Then silence, the smell of gunpowder, and two fine whitetails down in the snow. Seconds later Annie appeared, eyes shining, her blaze orange camo outfit bright against the snowy forest background. Our glances met. She waved and I smiled back. We knew we'd just shared a rare moment in the outdoors — a "double" on big woods deer.

That hunt illustrates just some of the reasons I actually prefer hunting antlerless deer over bucks. I know there's nothing like the emotion that grabs a hunter when a big buck creeps toward his stand on opening day, polished antlers flashing in the morning sun. And, as for bragging rights, a 90-pound doe does not compare to a buck with a polished 8-point rack when it comes to showing off to the guys down at the coffee shop. But for pure hunting pleasure, I'll take antlerless deer season every time.

For one thing, I know my chances of getting shooting are much more likely in doe season. I don't always succeed, of course, but I always believe I will. That confidence is a real joy compared to the wishful thinking attitude taken into buck season.

I also appreciate the more relaxed atmosphere at camp. Doe hunting is a lower pressure pursuit than buck hunting, partly because we're not chasing some career-best wallhanger, and also because we expect more than one shooting opportunity. If we don't get a shot at the first deer we see, or if we miss cleanly (verified, of course, by a thorough check), we're not dramatically disappointed. There's never the tension or emotional risk of that once-in-a-decade shot at a trophy buck. We just smile, shrug and enjoy the woods as we continue our search for another deer. We also experiment more in doe season, try new places, and sometimes discover future buck hunting spots.

Antlerless deer season can provide more of a hunt and less of a competition than buck season. Less peer pressure encumbers the hunt. When you return home from buck camp, you must answer those inevitable questions from friends and relatives. "Well, did you get your buck this year?" "How come you only shot a spike?" "Did you know my 12-year-old niece got a big 10-point right here at her cousin's farm?"

In my game lands hunting area, far fewer hunters enter the woods for the doe days than for the first two days of buck season. Opening day for buck always finds me up on a boulder before daylight, setting up and waiting for the "orange army" to start moving deer in my direction.

With a much smaller crowd wandering the ridges and hollows on antlerless days, I always feel I need to move my own deer from their bedding areas. I still-hunt then or conduct mini drives with companions. These methods demand more skill, provide more action and more fun than sitting on stand all day.

We also often invite youngsters to camp to experience their first or second hunting seasons. Doe season gives them more shooting opportunities, more chances to get their first deer, and more learning situations to refine their hunting skills. We camp veterans find much satisfaction in watching the next generation catch on to the thrills of hunting in the big woods region of Pennsylvania.



WE OFTEN invite youngsters to camp to experience their first or second hunting seasons. Doe season gives them more shooting opportunities and more learning situations to refine their hunting skills.

I also prefer the weather we typically get for the antlerless season over what we often get in buck season. Outdoor writers often depict buck hunts under scenic snowy conditions, but that's wishful thinking. The week after Thanksgiving is more likely to bring rain and mud than a fresh white powder on the forest floor. Two weeks later, though, in mid-December, the mountain counties of Pennsylvania are often blessed with a soft white curtain of snow. The silent beauty of a woods blanketed in snow, the improved visibility of deer on the white background, and the tracking advantage make hunting conditions superior to those in the earlier antlered deer season.

The fact that doe season occurs at the end of buck season adds to the hunt. Hunters who've already spent days in the deer woods feel better acclimated to outdoor surroundings. Those who hunt the same area for bucks and then antlerless deer learn where the deer are moving that year, which can only add to a hunter's confidence and success rate.

Most members of my family love venison, but if we had to rely on me getting a buck every year, we'd starve. I do manage to kill at least one deer every year, though, buck or doe, and so does Annie, so we get to enjoy plenty of various venison dishes every winter and spring. Without the bounty of the annual antlerless deer season, however, our freezer would often end up venison deprived.

I'm a firm believer in the Game Commission's program of controlling the whitetail herd through the allocation of antlerless deer licenses. I can tolerate seeing fewer deer in the woods if they are bigger, better-racked bucks and healthier does, and if the ecosystem benefits from a reduced population of one dominant species. Maybe that's the most important reason of all for participating in antlerless deer hunting. □

FIELD NOTES

Full Agenda

MONROE — While at the Game Commission display at a local fair WCO Mark Rutkowski tirelessly answered questions, gave out reference material, and even found the time to provide a demonstration on how to open his locked vehicle after leaving the keys on the front seat.

— WCO VICTOR E. ROSA, MONROE



Full Circle

GREENE — Stopping to ask directions at a house at dinnertime, I was invited in to eat with the family. When I asked what they were having, I was told southern fried opossum. I suddenly remembered that I wasn't hungry, but replied that I had always heard opossum tasted just like chicken. The cook told me it should because it ate 13 of her chickens before ending up in the frying pan.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Wanted To Roast Them

SOMERSET — I was called about a bear that had been tearing apart large round bales of hay that were enclosed in white plastic. I believe the bear thought they were giant marshmallows.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Snagged a Big One

ALLEGHENY — A mallard at the Ross Township Park Pond had some fishing line wrapped around its leg, with the other end of the line dragging a small branch. I didn't think it would be possible to catch the duck to free it, so I borrowed a fishing rod from a young fisherman named Eric. After about 15 minutes of casting with a lure, I finally snagged the branch and reeled in the duck. With a little help from Eric and his friends, I was able to free the duck from its tangled mess.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Bad Luck

SNYDER — LMO Steve Bernardi and I were patrolling on ATVs when mine broke down. Steve was towing me out with his when an electrical malfunction caused his seat to nearly catch on fire. If you run into Steve, ask him about Murphy's Law and how it feels to be in the hot seat.

— WCO GERALD L. SMITH, SAYRE

Just Can't Win

SOMERSET — Two years ago Deputy Dale Berkebile submitted his application to become a deputy in my district. After a year of ride along status, passing an admission test, waiting a year for the deputy training class, attending training at Ross Leffler School of Conservation, and passing the commission's first certification test, Dale was finally ready to receive his deputy commission. On his first assignment a buck ran out in front of Dale's new truck, damaging it pretty badly. Needing a ride to meet me, Dale met up with Deputy Dave Johnson, but on the way Dave hit a deer. The deer here are sure doing a job on my deputy force.

— WCO SCOTT W. TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN



Awful Big Turkeys

ELK — When the dispatcher directed me to help State Police round up some ostriches, I was a little skeptical, but an hour later I was looking at four that were causing a traffic problem. We managed to catch two and got them back to the farmer, but two still remain at large. I'll bet there were some interesting stories as turkey hunters told their wives about the size of the turkeys this year. I suspect some wives might put the sightings in the same class as pink elephants.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Out of Joint

I was watching two male hummingbirds performing their aerial combat maneuvers at the feeder when one went to stab at the other bird and impaled itself in the window screen. It soon freed itself, but I had to wonder if it had to get its beak realigned.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Good Intentions

MONROE — Some local residents asked me to remove a bear and its four cubs from their yard and take them back to Tobyhanna. I asked them why Tobyhanna, and they said because that's where the check station is. I explained that the check station is used only during the 3-day bear season to collect data from harvested bears.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Good Old Days

FULTON — Big bucks seem to be everywhere this year, and with nearly 100,000 acres of land open to hunters in Fulton County, it should be a banner year.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Better than a Woolly Caterpillar

BRADFORD — Paul Pfeiffer of Durell told me that he had a blue tarp laying in his backyard, and one day he noticed it in his far field. Paul thought that the wind blew it there, but when he went to retrieve it he noticed that half of it had been pulled into a woodchuck hole. He asked me if I had ever heard of a woodchuck doing this. I told him that I hadn't, but that it might be a sign of a hard winter.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



That'll Teach Him

Our old rooster is pretty territorial, and one morning early last fall he noticed two deer feeding under an apple tree in the backyard. The feisty chicken charged up to the biggest doe and started his "threatening shuffle." Seeing this, the doe put her head down and charged the rooster, chasing him into the tomato patch. Realizing the superior size and speed of his opponent, the rooster decided to abandon his efforts and take out his frustration on my tomatoes.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Wishes Do Come True

MONTGOMERY — I was at Green Lane County Park talking to park naturalist Kevin Crilley about the bald eagles that are often seen there. I told Kevin that I hadn't seen an eagle for a long time when we looked up and saw a beautiful mature bald eagle flying above us.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Strange But True

HUNTINGDON — I was called to take care of a fawn at the Trimer farm and discovered that the deer did not have eyes. What was even more remarkable was that this took place on October 1.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Got Ya There

DAUPHIN — During a recent Community Day we had a mounted otter on display, and I was amused by the efforts of some of the youngsters to identify the animal. It was called everything from a muskrat to a wolf. Finally, a young boy called out, "It's an otter because my dad has one." Because they're protected, this raised my curiosity. When I asked him where his dad kept his otter he replied, "On his license plate."

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, MIDDLETOWN.

Long Way From Home

CRAWFORD — At the 2000 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association Conference in Albany, New York, I was selected to take part in the Officer Exchange Program, which gave me the opportunity to work with officers in the Canadian province of my choice. I chose northern Manitoba and while there ran into a hunter from Erie County. After his confirmation that I actually was a WCO from Pennsylvania, he still seemed surprised as he walked away. Some hunters think we never get off the road or out of our vehicles.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE



Wake-Up Call

CENTRE — Working night patrol can be a great experience. When things are slow you can sit back, watch the stars, listen to the sounds and enjoy some quiet time. Sometimes you can become a little too relaxed, though, unless you have a deputy who hits the siren button while trying to adjust the radio. Right, Andy?

— WCO ERIC L. SETH, SNOWSHOE

Slept Through Class

FRANKLIN — After teaching at an evening HTE class, deputies Bob Johnson and Jody Eyer, while on night patrol, stopped a vehicle for spotlighting after 11 p.m. In the car was a mother and her two boys who were on their way home from the very same HTE course.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Nice Try

PERRY — I was conducting a program about beavers at an elementary school and asked if anyone knew the purpose of the extra nail on the second toe on a beaver's hind foot. While none of the youngsters knew that it is used for preening, one boy guessed it was used to inject poison into its prey. I commended the boy on his vivid imagination, but suggested that he might be watching too many James Bond movies.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERSTOWN

Healthy Population

In just September, WCO Don Schauer and I saw two young bobcats cross a road in the Cherry Ridge. That's the second time this year I saw a bobcat, which is more than I've seen in the past 30 years.

— LMO John C. Shutkufski, Damascus



Nice Going, Vic

Northumberland — I was assigned to work the Game Commission display at the Bloomsburg Fair with WCO Victor Rosa. When we arrived Vic had brought along a different money box, because someone had called the day before and said they were having trouble with the combination and couldn't get the original box locked. Before transferring the money to the new box, however, Vic thought he could fix the broken one. After playing with the combination he announced that he had fixed it. He fixed it all right; now we couldn't get the box open and had no change to work with.

— WCO Dirk Remensnyder, Sunbury

Got a Leg Up On You

While working on SGL 277 near Cambridge Springs we took a break for lunch, and when Kirk Johnson finished a piece of chicken he laid the half-eaten leg down at the base of a tree. A large fox squirrel came down the tree and picked up the leg and ate the rest of it.

— LMO Wayne Lugaila, Waterford

Stumped Us

Lawrence — While manning the booth at the Lawrence County Fair, Deputy Bob Sipe and I were speechless when a man asked us how to get rid of an armadillo from under his house. I guess the quizzical looks on our faces got him to explain that he was visiting from Georgia, and thought maybe we would know what to do.

— WCO Randy Pilarcik, Portersville

What It's All About

Forest — While checking hunters I especially enjoy seeing a father passing the hunting tradition on to his young son or daughter. I'm lucky enough to still spend time enjoying the outdoors with my own father. To those of you who still have this opportunity but fail to take advantage of it, I say do it now before it's too late. So many of us can fondly remember hunting companions that are no longer with us and long for just one more day afield with loved ones now gone.

— WCO Richard T. Cramer, Tionesta

Good Trail Boss

After assisting legendary WCO Bill Bower remove some nuisance geese from Mt. Pisgah State Park in what must have been a record-time round up, I couldn't help but think of the TV commercial that shows wranglers herding cats. Believe me, they got nothing on you, Bill.

— LMO Richard J. Lupinsky, Sr., East Smithfield

Good Point

Many sportsmen have told me that the new *Hunting & Trapping Regulations Digest* is too large to fit in the hunting license backtag holder. Keep in mind that the shooting hours along with the seasons and bag limits page can be removed from the digest, folded and placed with your license. The change in digest format saved a lot of sportsmens' dollars.

— WES Kevin W. Thompson, Northwest Region, Franklin

Honest

FULTON — The dispatcher sent out a call that the Fulton County WCO needed assistance, and because I had a good idea where he would be working I responded. When I got to the site I saw the state vehicle but no WCO, then a soaking wet person that looked like a drowned rat came sloshing up to the vehicle. "You're not going to tell anyone I locked myself out of my vehicle in a rainstorm are you?" "Nope, Steve, I wouldn't dare."

— DEPUTY BOB STRAIT, NEEDMORE

Learned Lesson

CLARION — A few years ago during the spring gobbler season I cited a man for moving about without wearing the required fluorescent orange. After explaining why I was citing him, and of the dangers of not wearing orange, he said, "When my wife finds out I've been fined, she's going to kill me anyway." I'm happy to report that he's still alive and well, as I ran into him during the first week of this year's gobbler season. He came out of the woods wearing his orange and carrying his first gobbler.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Almost Let the Cat Out of the Bag

WAYNE — Bobcats are extremely reclusive, and it's unusual to spot them in the wild. During the last week of September, however, I saw four bobcats in three different locations. I hope one of the lucky persons who drew a permit will have the opportunity to harvest one of these wild cats. By the way, two of them were on SGL . . .

— WCO DONALD R. SCHAUER, HONESDALE

It Figures

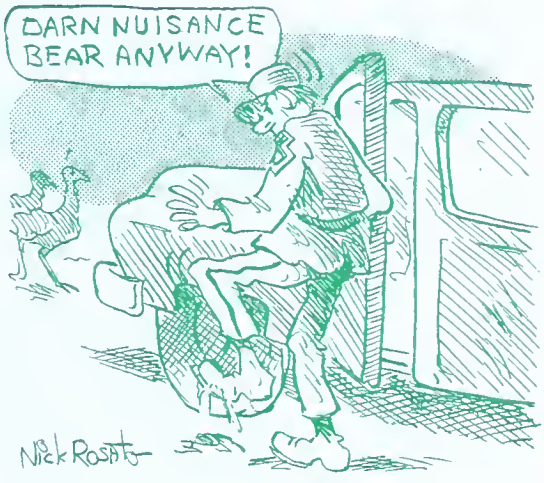
ALLEGHENY — A man told me that during the gobbler season he had friends hunting on his property, and while he was sitting in his house, he noticed a gobbler pecking at the tires of the hunters' truck in the driveway. After returning to the truck the hunters informed him that they had not seen or heard any turkeys.

— WCO DAN SITLER, OAKMONT

Dedicated

MONTGOMERY — Christopher Underwood from Manchester England came to the Towamancin Township Fire House to attend a Hunter-Trapper Ed class. He's going to return in the fall to hunt here in Pennsylvania.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



All This and a Paycheck, Too

MCKEAN — On SGL 59 in Potter County I pulled over to watch a 6-point buck feeding along the road, then noticed a flock of about 10 turkeys heading my way. I stepped out of my vehicle to get a better look at the turkeys when I stepped in a pile of proof of what bears do in the woods.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Bit the Hand that Feeds Them

Chicago and New Orleans recently received $50,000 each through a program called Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds. New Orleans also received a $1 million grant through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. All of this money was derived from Pittman-Robertson funds (11 percent excise tax placed on firearms and ammunition). The irony of this is that both Chicago and New Orleans have filed lawsuits against the gun industry, the very source of this funding.

— LMO GEORGE MILLER, PITTSBURGH

Deer poachers nabbed

FOUR INDIVIDUALS have pled guilty to multiple charges for illegally taking deer at night, in Bedford County. Charges were filed by WCO Dan Yahner at District Justice Cathy Calhoun's office in Everett against Kevin D. Beckett Jr., 18, of Osterburg, three counts of killing deer at night; Randy J. McCreary, 23, of Imler, three counts of killing deer at night; and two juvenile brothers, 16- and 17-years-old, of Black Valley, Everett.

There was one count against the 16-year-old, and five counts against the 17-year-old.

Beckett and McCreary were each fined $1,800. One of the juveniles was fined $600; the other juvenile was fined $3,000. All four individuals face revocation of their hunting and trapping privileges.

Additionally, 108 warnings were issued for various lesser violations, including: spotlighting after 11p.m.; possessing loaded firearms in vehicles; shooting on or across highways; and wanton waste of game.

Information gathered by Land Management Officer (LMO) Dave Koppenhaver; Bedford County WCOs Jim Trombetto and Tim Flanigan, and Deputy WCO Bob Sabo led to WCO Dan Yahner and Deputy WCO Keith Comer conducting a search of a residence in Black Valley near Everett on Labor Day.

In the process of the search, butchered parts from at least two deer were recovered, as well as a rifle, ammunition, empty casings and butchering equipment.

Written confessions were taken concerning nights during August and September, when the defendants rode around in McCreary's car and, with 22-caliber rimfire rifles, shot at many deer. At least four deer were taken to a residence in Black Valley and butchered. Meat from two of the deer was left to spoil and later discarded.

The majority of the deer were simply shot and left to die, or the deer ran off and no attempt was made to recover them.

One defendant detailed a single night when he and another defendant rode around and shot an entire box of 22-caliber rimfire ammunition (50 rounds) at deer. Only one deer was recovered and taken to the Black Valley residence.

Another night was detailed where one of the defendants shot at 10 to 15 deer, and a second defendant shot at 20 to 25 deer. Only two or three of the deer were taken that night.

WCO Yahner reported that despite all the illegal spotlighting and shooting that took place, only two individuals came forth with information that led to solving the case.

"We were able to bring this episode to an end because these two concerned people were interested enough to report these violations," WCO Yahner said. "Who knows how long these activities may have continued if it had not been for two people who cared enough to call us."

Alt honored by PSU Alumni Association

DR. GARY ALT, was recognized as an Alumni Fellow Award recipient by the Penn State University Alumni Association on October 12. Established in 1973, the Alumni Fellow Award is the Penn State Alumni Association's most prestigious award, honoring prominent and outstanding alumni who are leaders in their fields and have made notable contributions to society and their community.

"There is no dispute that Dr. Gary Alt has already made his mark in the history of bear biology in Pennsylvania and around the world," said Dr. Claudia Limbert, Penn State University at DuBois Campus executive officer. "In fact, because of his past accomplishments, many students have enrolled in our program and look to Dr. Alt as a role model in the field of wildlife biology.

"Now, Dr. Alt has risen to the challenge of heading up the Game Commission's Deer Management Section, and demonstrated a willingness to tackle the serious issues facing deer management. His work is absolutely critical if we are to assure the future health and welfare of Pennsylvania's hunting heritage, wildlife populations and the entire ecosystem.

"We are extremely proud that one of our own is standing on the frontier of a new day in Pennsylvania's deer management program," Dr. Limbert said.

The program is designed to invite the Alumni Fellows to return to specific colleges of Penn State University to share their expertise with students, faculty and administrators. The Fellows teach classes, lead seminars and meet informally with students and faculty for a few days each fall.

Alt earned a master's degree in Wildlife Management from Penn State University and an associate's degree in Wildlife Technology from Penn State University's DuBois Campus. He also earned a doctorate in Forest Resources Science from West Virginia University and a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Science from Utah State University.

"I am humbled that the Penn State University Alumni Association has chosen to honor me with their Alumni Fellow Award," Alt said. "While I dedicated much of my life to Pennsylvania's bear management program, I now face a greater professional challenge: helping to shape a better deer management program for the commonwealth."

At recent meetings Dr. Alt pledged to hold a public meeting within 50 miles of every Pennsylvanian within the next nine months to explain the Game Commission's deer management program.

"Last year, we held nearly 60 public meetings, and many of those were hosted by members of the House and Senate," Alt said. "We plan to build on the success of those meetings, because we understand that the key to the success of our deer management program is public education and outreach.

"By continuing to work with the Commissioners, legislators, hunters, foresters, farmers and other interested Pennsylvanians, we will build on our recent steps forward. We all must stay focused on the two main objectives: implementing changes to bring about a better balance between the deer herd

and the forest ecosystem, and to bring about a better buck to doe ratio to improve their basic breeding ecology."

To address the imbalance in the buck to doe ratio, Dr. Alt and his team are evaluating several options that will be presented in January to the Game Commissioners for consideration in scheduling the 2001-2002 hunting seasons. One option is to place an antler restriction on buck hunters. Another option would be to move the regular, 3-day antlerless season — traditionally held in early December — to late October, prior to the main breeding season.

"Hunters currently harvest 75 to 90 percent of the total population of antlered bucks annually," Alt said. "Less than one percent of our bucks live to age four, which is when they reach their prime. With so many does and so few older bucks, there is little competition for mating. By putting an antler restriction in place, we will allow more bucks to reach an older age class, thereby restoring some of the natural competition for breeding rites."

Alt noted that moving the antlerless season from mid-December to late October may be more effective in balancing the buck-to-doe ratio problem.

"By harvesting the antlerless deer before the rut, rather than after, we will enable the bucks to breed with the does that will likely survive winter," Alt said. "In addition, removing those antlerless deer before the rut will ease the pressure on the habitat, which will allow for more food for the remaining deer and allow the forests to begin the recovery process."

Alt also reviewed some current research and unveiled upcoming research projects the Deer Management Section has planned, including: conducting hunter surveys, to find out more about what hunters want; and landowner surveys, to uncover what can be done to increase hunter access to private lands; and creating forest restoration areas, to demonstrate what can be accomplished by allowing hunters greater access to control deer numbers.

"Forest restoration areas will allow us to closely monitor the benefit of aggressively hunting does for a short-term population decline so that the habitat can recover," Alt said. "We also need to get into these areas and intensively improve the habitat so that the remaining deer will be able to increase body size, improve antler development, increase reproductive success and promote fawn survival. The bottom line is that if the habitat is not allowed to recover, the deer herd and entire ecosystem will continue to suffer."

The Game Commission currently is conducting a fawn mortality project in two areas of northcentral Pennsylvania: the Quehanna Wild Area in Clearfield and Cameron counties; and Penns Valley in Centre County. By using radio telemetry on fawns, the agency is studying the mortality rates and causes, as well as the movements in the fawn populations at these two sites. Alt would like to expand telemetry projects to include intensively studying deer and hunter movements and interactions; and monitoring the relationship between deer, habitat quality, nutrition and reproduction.

"By increasing our knowledge about our deer herd, we will better understand what challenges we face," Alt said. "Hunters and others must understand that we do not want to decrease the current deer densities because we don't like deer. We must decrease the current deer impacts in problem areas, so we can fix the habitat and improve the deer herd for the long-term."

"The House Game and Fisheries Committee appreciates Dr. Alt taking the time to keep us informed on his progress and plans," said Rep. Bruce Smith, who chairs the committee. "His report will enable us to respond to constituent inquiries we receive from hunters and others concerned about the future of deer management. We also look forward to working with him as he continues to educate the public about the future of Pennsylvania's deer management program."

Big bull elk poached

THE GAME Commission is seeking information about the illegal killing of a large bull elk in Grove Township, Cameron County, in mid-October.

A Game Commission employee discovered the dead elk on the morning of October 16, and reported it to WCO Wesley Stauffer, who is heading up the investigation. The elk was found along Route 120 on the Clinton/Cameron county line.

"Our conservation officers are conducting an in-depth investigation into this crime," said Commission Northcentral Region Director Barry R. Hambley. "We will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to bring those responsible for this killing to justice.

"We are asking for the public's help in locating the person or persons responsible. This was a truly magnificent animal, with an outside antler spread of over six feet. Based on a necropsy, we know the elk was shot sometime during the weekend of October 14-15. Our officers have been able to collect evidence from the scene, but we need more. Anyone having information regarding this violation is asked to call."

Hambley noted that anyone with information should call the Game Commission's toll-free TIP Hotline at 1-888-PGC-8001, or the Northcentral Region Office toll-free at 1-877-877-7674. Any information received will be kept strictly confidential.

Hambley stated that thousands of visitors are attracted to northcentral Pennsylvania in October, to view Pennsylvania's elk herd and other wildlife, as well as the fall foliage, in and around the area in which the dead elk was discovered.

"This elk weighed more than 800 pounds and was especially impressive because of its massive non-typical antlers," said Rawley Cogan, commission elk biologist. "For those who had the opportunity to see it, the thrill will last a long time. Unfortunately, no one else will have that opportunity again.

"This particular animal was perhaps the largest bull elk in Pennsylvania's herd, and had been featured in the Game Commission's elk video."

Based on recent trends, the Game Commission estimates the state's current elk population to be 650 animals. The elk range includes all of Cameron and Elk counties and portions of Clinton, Clearfield and Potter counties.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Nearly 7,000 acres added to game lands

AT THE October meeting, the Commissioners approved the purchase and donation of several parcels and other land transactions that will result in the acquisition of nearly 7,000 acres. "The support of our partners in preserving open spaces for public hunting and trapping has never been more important," said Vern Ross, commission executive director. "At this meeting alone, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy assisted in three projects accounting for more than 400 acres. The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and The Wildlands Conservancy, once again, played critical roles in assisting the Game Commission.

"However, one of the most remarkable of these projects is the donation of 2,410 acres in Centre County by The Conservation Fund. This truly is an exceptional addition to the state game land system."

Following is a breakdown of the approved transactions:

Berks County: a donation from Donald M. Yost, Lisa Rutledge and Anne Nichols of an island containing approximately 4.75 acres in the Schuylkill River, just downriver from Reading. This island will comprise a new state game land and be designated SGL 324.

Centre County: A donation of 2,410 acres in Boggs, Howard, Marion and Spring townships from The Conservation Fund. This tract will comprise a new game lands and be designated SGL 323. A national land and water conservation organization, The Conservation Fund has helped protect 4,901 acres in Pennsylvania since 1985. The group is based in Arlington, Virginia, and has an office in Harrisburg.

Clearfield County: the purchase of 3,350 acres in Beccaria, Chester and Jordon townships and Irvona Borough, adjacent to SGL 120, from the Tenants in Common of the Elwood Burgess Estate for $850,000. Approximately 50 acres are tillable, 50 acres are reverting farmland, 100 acres are wetlands, 350 acres are reclaimed and revegetated surface mine, and the remainder is forested. In addition, the Tenants are offering an additional 3,006 acres of oil, gas and mineral rights. There currently are 21 active gas wells on the tract. SGL 120 currently contains 3,500 acres.

Erie County: the purchase of 170 acres in Amity Township, adjacent to SGL 162, from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for $117,000. Of that amount, $68,000 will be paid from the Game Fund, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide $49,000 in cost-share funds to the Conservancy to assist in the acquisition, which will join several tracts of SGL 162 together. It has 80 acres of tillable land, and more than 3,000 feet of frontage on State Route 8, which will provide easy access. SGL 162 currently contains 591 acres.

Fayette County: an option on 220 acres, which was offered by Consolidated Coal Company for $66,000. The parcel is made up of 10 acres of reverting fields, 3 acres of wetlands and the remainder is forested. It is adjacent to SGL 296, which currently contains 2,112 acres. The Game Commission will pay $6,000 from the Game Fund, and $60,000 will be provided toward

the acquisition of the parcel by Coolspring Stone Supply Inc.

On April 4, the Commissioners authorized an addendum to the existing mineral lease with Coolspring to deep-mine and remove limestone from beneath a portion of SGL 51. The addendum provided for an advance royalty payment of $60,000 in the form of a tract of land to be approved by the Commissioners at a future meeting.

Greene County: the purchase of 41.3 acres in Richhill Township, adjacent to SGL 302, from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for $16,520. The majority of the parcel is wooded hillside along the Enlow Fork. SGL 302 currently comprises 1,048 acres.

Huntingdon County: the purchase of 16 acres in Porter Township, adjacent to SGL 118, from the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy for $6,400. The tract is forested and will improve public access to SGL 118, which currently contains 6,030 acres.

Indiana County: the purchase of two tracts comprising 150 acres in Banks Township, adjacent to SGL 262, from Joseph C. Clark for $45,000. Approximately 50 acres are reclaimed and revegetated surface mines, 7 acres are wetlands and the remainder is forested. SGL 262 currently contains 941 acres.

Lebanon County: the donation of 8.5 acres in South Lebanon Township, adjacent to SGL 156, from The Wildlands Conservancy Inc. No conditions, restrictions or obligations have been placed on the donation. SGL 156 currently contains 4,948.5 acres.

Lycoming/Elk counties: the acquisition of 191 acres in Benezette Township, Elk County, from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The parcel is considered critical for the management of the state's elk herd. At a public meeting on April 21, 1998, the Commissioners approved a surface mine coal lease with Fisher Mining Company on SGL 75, Lycoming County.

The lease required Fisher to convey and/or purchase a total of 2,655.9 acres for the Game Commission, and provide an additional $400,002 in funds for the Game Commission to acquire additional lands. The new parcel consists of 100 acres of reclaimed and revegetated surface mines, 20 acres of fields and the remainder is forested. It is adjacent to SGL 311, which currently contains 2,684 acres, and will be purchased by using $209,000 from the monies owed to the Game Commission by Fisher.

Pike County: a land exchange with the Pike County Industrial Development Corporation, which will result in the net gain of more than 192 acres for the Game Commission. In the exchange, the Pike County IDC will receive an 8-acre portion of SGL 180 in Blooming Grove Township to allow for the realignment of State Route 1001. The Game Commission will receive from the Pike County IDC a 200-acre parcel, also in Blooming Grove Township and adjacent to SGL 180. The new parcel, which has no reservations, is comprised of nearly 40 acres of woodlands and the remainder is classified as high-value wetlands.

Westmoreland/Indiana counties: a land exchange with Consol Inc., will result in the gain of more than 114 acres for the Commission. In the exchange, Consol will receive a 5.89-acre detached parcel of SGL 296 in Sewickley Township, Westmoreland County, for the purpose of creating a wetland system to treat acid mine discharge. The Game Commission will receive a 120-acre tract, with no reservations, in Center Township, Indiana County, adjacent to SGL 276.

Elk nuisance policy approved

THE GAME Commissioners approved a policy that outlines how elk nuisance situations will be handled. Under the new policy, WCOs and Deputy WCOs are to work with local authorities to haze an elk that is in a conflict area in a populated community. If it is apparent that an elk will not leave despite hazing efforts, Game Commission officials are permitted, with the approval of the region office, to tranquilize and relocate the elk to a suitable area. Prior to being released, however, the elk will be collared and tagged.

If an elk is presenting an imminent threat to public health or safety, and tranquilization is not feasible, a Game Commission official may kill the elk. Also, an elk handled for the third time also may be put down. In any case in which an elk is killed, a full report must be made to the region director, and the carcass must be used in an appropriate manner.

For property damage situations, the agency will work with landowners and homeowners to prevent or minimize elk-related conflicts by providing technical advice and assistance. Pennsylvanians are reminded that it is illegal to intentionally feed elk.

Elk are found primarily in Elk and Cameron counties, as well as portions of Clearfield, Clinton, Centre and Potter counties.

Hunters Sharing the Harvest grant approved

THE GAME Commission approved a 3-year grant totaling $15,000 for the Pennsylvania Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH) program, to help finance the processing of deer meat donated by hunters. In its 10th year, the nonprofit HSH is sponsored by Pennsylvanians for Responsible Use of Animals and operates with the cooperation of the Game Commission and state Department of Agriculture, along with the Pennsylvania Deer Association, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and several state chapters of Safari Club International and the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania. The program also is supported by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, statewide meat processor trade groups and religious organizations.

"Last year, about 85,000 pounds of venison were donated to HSH," said John Plowman, commission special events coordinator. "That meat was distributed to 200,000 needy Pennsylvanians through food banks, shelters and homeless missions. It's a tremendously service, one many hunters are proud to participate in.

"Many Pennsylvanians actually prefer venison because it is a lean, low-cholesterol, protein-rich food. If you're health conscious, it's hard to ignore venison's benefits."

Additionally, hunters this year will be asked to consider donating a dollar through HSH "Give a Buck" program. These funds will assist in the processing of deer meat donated to feed those in need. For every $50 raised, a deer can be processed and provide 100 meals.

For information on participating meat processors, call 717-367-5223, or e-mail: keystnken@aol.com.

Tundra swan funding approved

WITH THE SUPPORT of the Game Commissioners, Pennsylvania has joined in a cooperative research effort with Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia to learn more about tundra swans, which pass through much of Pennsylvania during spring and fall migrations.

The four states will work through the Wildlife Management Institute, headquartered in Washington, DC, to define the breeding and wintering areas and migration routes of tundra swans. The waterfowl will be tracked through the use of satellite transmitters, which cost about $2,500 each.

The Game Commissioners agreed to provide $25,000 from the Game Fund toward the purchase of transmitters and development of location data. Waterfowl hunting organizations also have contributed $14,500 to the project.

"Unfortunately, the movements of swans between breeding, wintering and migration areas are poorly known," said John Dunn, Commission waterfowl biologist. "Identification of key migration habitats is necessary to protect these areas from future threats."

Tundra swans are the state's largest migratory waterfowl species. Wintering concentrations occur primarily in Lebanon and Lancaster counties, especially at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

The birds will be tracked from their wintering locations in eastern states and along migration routes to breeding areas in the arctic regions of Alaska and Canada. Biologists expect to collect data on the breeding range and instate migratory stopovers, as well as the movements between these areas; estimates of average annual survival rates; extent and timing of movements; and fidelity and population affiliation of swans to Pennsylvania wintering locations.

Funding for Luzerne County rifle range approved

THE GAME Commissioners approved $56,000 for the construction of a 100-yard, 10-station rifle range on SGL 119 in Luzerne County.

Championed by Commissioner George Venesky, the estimated project cost is $134,000. However, Venesky indicated that he had secured cost-cutting measures through donations of equipment and labor, which should reduce the cost by $60,000 to $65,000.

Results of the Game Commission's open house in July showed that 114 people supported the Tunnel Road site on SGL 119; 52 supported the Francis Walter Dam site on SGL 119; 37 supported the Lake Francis site on SGL 187; and 55 supported alternative sites.

The site along Tunnel Road on SGL 119 originally was purchased by the Game Commission with the use of federal Pittman-Robertson funds. The Game Commission must receive approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before any construction takes place.

The Commissioners approved the expenditure of $9,000 from the Game Fund in two previous actions.

Surface mine project to benefit wildlife and water quality

THE GAME Commission approved a lease for Mulligan Mining Inc. of Bethel Park, Allegheny County, to surface mine and remove approximately 421,125 tons of coal from a 158.7 acre tract of land on SGL 117, in northern Washington County.

"Because of the abandoned mining areas on SGL 117, there are a number of unreclaimed highwalls and spoils, as well as acid mine drainage pollution," said Greg Grabowicz, Commission Bureau of Land Management director. "Through this lease, Mulligan will reclaim and revegetate more than 1,520 feet of previously abandoned highwall, 4.6 acres of abandoned surface mine spoil, 3 acres of abandoned deepmine, and incorporate at least 100 tons per acre of alkaline material in the backfill."

Mulligan also will supply all the necessary materials and assistance for the Game Commission to repair nine parking lots on SGL 117.

In addition, Mulligan will pay into an interest-bearing escrow account an advance royalty payment of $62,000 for the Commission to purchase future tracts of land. Within 18 months of receiving written notification by the Commission, Mulligan will either provide a second advance royalty payment into the escrow account of $82,000 or repair the Hillman Dam on SGL 117.

"This dam provides excellent wildlife habitat," Grabowicz noted. "Unfortunately, the agency has been unable to finance regular maintenance and repairs. Mulligan has offered us the ability to have the dam repaired and brought back up to specifications."

The Game Commission also will receive from Mulligan coal royalty payments estimated to be $842,250 and $35,088 for the merchantable timber that will be removed during the surface mining project.

"This project is a win-win for all," Grabowicz said. "The mining project will provide the coal company employees with work, the coal users with affordable energy and the local and state governments with tax revenues. The reclamation and revegetation by Mulligan will improve the water quality for the surrounding community and the local wildlife populations. And, the upgraded parking lots and the removal of highwalls will improve safety on SGL 117 for sportsmen and sportswomen."

The project is in direct support of Governor Tom Ridge's re-mining initiative programs to improve the environment.

In other Action, the Commission:

- Approved a fiscal year 2001-02 budget of $66.8 million. Also, any lapsed funds from the current 2000-01 budget will be added to the Bureau of Land Management's land acquisition program.
- Approved a policy for the purchase and distribution of wearing apparel for Game Commission employees who do not perform law enforcement duties. Adoption of this policy is consistent with the recommendations of the MAT report.
- Approved a policy to encourage public involvement in Game Commission decision-making processes during all stages of planning and project development. Adoption of this policy is consistent with the recommendations of the MAT report.

• Approved a change in policy regarding the appropriate use of prescribed burns in the restoration or improvement of wildlife habitat.

• Gave final approval to a proposed rule to allow the use of flintlock muzzleloading pistols in the Southeast and Southwest Special Regulations Areas. Statewide use of flintlock muzzleloading pistols already had been approved.

• Gave final approval to a proposed rule to allow the use of single-projectile ammunition, including the use of sabots, in the flintlock muzzleloader seasons.

• Approved a proposed rule that would clarify in regulation the intended restrictions on which sporting arms are legal in special regulation counties. The Commission must approve this proposed rule at a subsequent meeting before it takes effect.

• Approved a proposed rule to permit the use of certain sporting arm electronic ignition systems, which are not perceived to impact on the spirit of fair chase or to offer any undo advantage to the user of such as device. The Board must approve this proposed rule at a subsequent meeting before it takes effect.

• Approved a change in the regulations to permit Pennsylvania resident active-duty military personnel, who possess the appropriate licenses, to hunt either antlered or antlerless deer during the two-week antlered season. This change in regulation must be approved at a subsequent Commission meeting. Currently, only junior, senior and certain disabled hunters have this opportunity.

• Approved the expenditure of $2,000 to support the Cooperative North American Shotgunning Education Program (CONSEP), which assists states in recruiting waterfowl and upland game hunters, developing educational programs and materials to improve the proficiency and image of shotgun hunters. CONSEP has financial commitments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the arms industry.

• Approved the expenditure of $15,385 to support the Northeast Wildlife Damage Management Research and Outreach Cooperative, which works to develop cost-effective public and private solutions to wildlife damage conflicts and to provide a regional process for damage management research.

• Approved the expenditure of up to $10,000 to conduct a feasibility study in conjunction with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources through the Lumber Heritage Study concerning options for wildlife viewing and an education facility in the Winslow Hill area of SGL 311, Benezette Township, Elk County.

• Changed the road use status of the Ginger Whisky Road on SGL 34, Clearfield County, to allow for better access to an established habitat complex, as well as alleviating the need for separate gate locks to accommodate right-of-way access to a private camp.

• Changed the road use status of Laurel Run-Vineyard Run Road on SGL 44, Elk County, and SGL 54, Jefferson County, to allow for better access during the bear and deer hunting seasons. Also, a change in ownership of a private access has eliminated public access.

• Approved a three-year pilot project for two K-9 units in the Southcentral Region. These units will be used to enforce the Game and Wildlife Code and for Game Commission public relations activities.

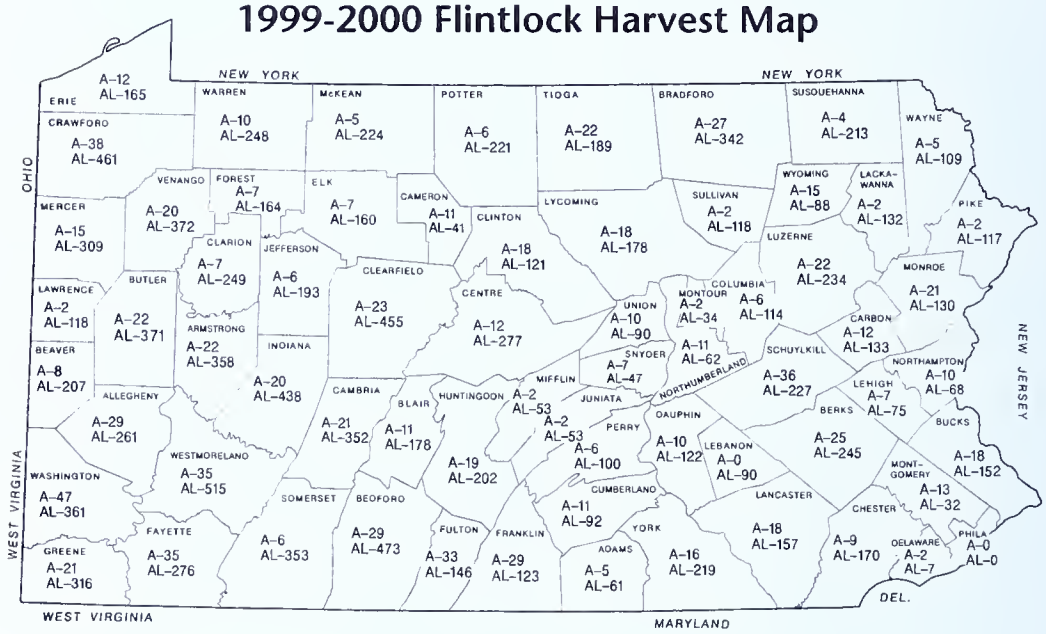
• Set the next meeting of the Board of Game Commissioners for Jan.

21, 22 and 23. This 3-day meeting will be held in the Harrisburg headquarters.

On Sunday, Jan. 21, the public will be invited to offer their suggestions for the 2001-02 hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits. On Monday, Jan. 22, the Commissioners will hear public comments and Commission staff reports.

On Tuesday, Jan. 23, the Commissioners will consider agenda items, including the preliminary adoption of seasons and bag limits for 2001-02. Final adoption of the seasons and bag limits will take place in April.

1999-2000 Flintlock Harvest Map



Flintlock season on tap

FLINTLOCK HUNTERS last year took 13,949 deer during the 18-day, post-Christmas season. Of this, 967 were antlered deer and 12,982 antlerless. This year's late season opens December 26 and runs through January 13. Those with a muzzleloader license who still have a valid "buck" tag, on their general hunting license, may use it to take an antlered or antlerless deer anywhere in the state. Flintlock hunters may also hunt in any county for which they have a valid antlerless or private lands license. Although flintlock hunters are not required to wear fluorescent orange during this late season, it is strongly suggested that they do so.

Also beginning this month is the late archery deer season and the late small game season.

Like the flintlock season, the archery deer season runs from December 26 though January 13. Properly licensed bowmen may take an antlered deer anywhere in the state, and antlerless deer in any county for which they have a valid antlerless or private lands license.

The late small game season opens December 26. The grouse season runs though January 27; rabbit, squirrel

and, where open, pheasant, runs until February 10. Small game hunters are required to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, chest and back combined at all times.

See the *2000-01 Hunting and Trapping Digest* for complete seasons, bag limits and regulations.

Frank Felbaum Scholarship Award

A $500 SCHOLARSHIP from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Wildlife Society is available for Pennsylvania high school seniors interested in pursuing a career in wildlife ecology at a college or university. There is no chance for renewal. The recipient of the Frank Felbaum Scholarship Award should be in the top 50 percent of his or her high school class and have demonstrated an interest and commitment to wildlife through volunteer and/or work experience. A letter of recommendation from someone who can attest to the recipient's ability and interest is required. Additionally, the recipient must submit an essay addressing the title, "Why I Would Like to Pursue a Career in Wildlife Ecology."

Please include appropriate documentation of class rank and acceptance at a college or university.

The deadline for submission of materials is February 1, 2001. All submissions must include a phone number (with area code) so that the Pennsylvania chapter may contact the recipient. Finalists may be interviewed by telephone.

The winner will be notified by February 14, 2001. Submit materials to: Shayne Hoachlander, R.D. 2, Box 140, Corry, PA 16407; daytime telephone (814) 664-8867.

CLAIR "BUTCH" CLEMENS, left, who served as a Pennsylvania Game Commissioner from December 1985-94, was recently honored as the 2000 Hall of Fame Winner for the Pennsylvania Livestock Association. Retired CEO of Hatfield Quality Meats, Clemens was active in his family's company, Hatfield Quality Meats, since 1946, and was instrumental in the company's growth during that time. As a Hall of Fame winner, Clemens' picture will be hung on the back wall of the small arena at the state Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg. With Clemens here is Dennis Grumbine, Farm Show Director.



John Plowman

Court ruling allows bobcat seasons to proceed

A COMMONWEALTH Court ruling issued on October 13 denied a petition filed a week earlier in an attempt by animal rights activists to block the first bobcat season to be offered in Pennsylvania since 1970.

"The Game Commission is pleased with the court's ruling, and we believe that it affirms the fact that the bobcat seasons were adopted in a public forum and based on sound science," said PGC Executive Director Vern Ross.

"In 1970, the Game Commission and the hunters and trappers of Pennsylvania moved to close the bobcat seasons out of a concern for dwindling numbers. However, after 30 years of protection and 15 years of field research by the Game Commission, the bobcat population has reached a point where we now can offer this challenging hunting and trapping opportunity."

A recent letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated that "it is apparent that a great deal of time, effort and expertise went into preparation of the (bobcat management) report submitted." The letter continued by noting that the report shows that the "bobcats taken in the 2000-2001 harvest season will not be detrimental to the survival of the species."

The hunting season opened on October 14, the trapping season on October 15, and both run through February 24, 2001.

Report Card reminder

DEER HUNTERS, don't forget to send in report cards for any and all deer you've taken, or do take in the late archery and muzzleloader seasons, this license year. Report cards provide vital information for our deer management program. Be sure to include the deer management unit and township where the deer was taken, too. This information is necessary to fully evaluate any change in the current, county deer managment unit system. Refer to page 19 of the current *Hunting and Trapping Digest* for a map of deer management units.

If you don't have a big game report card, use or make a copy of the one on page 40 of the *Digest*.

Contacting the Region Offices

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674
Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Another View
By Linda Steiner

True hunting light is that magical time when the sun is high enough that I can still see well and low enough that wildlife is on the move.

Hunting Light

"CAPTURING the beauty of natural light is the challenge," I said, "and one of the great rewards of outdoor photography."

I recently conducted a seminar on basic techniques for photographing the outdoors, from wildlife to waterfalls to successful hunters. I was trying to get across to the students — who came with point-and-shoot cameras as well as computer-controlled 35mms — the joys and frustrations of putting the many personalities of natural light on film.



Bob Steiner

HUNTING LIGHT provides as much texture to a day afield as an old brush coat. Hunting light is fickle, never constant, even on an average sunny day. Quality of light is as fleeting as a breeze in a goldenrod field.

Hunters experience many of the same joys and frustrations of natural light as photographers do. The difference between the two is that when hunters shoot something, it's in the literal, not figurative sense of "shooting" with a camera. Like an outdoor photographer, a hunter works with the intricacies and the vagaries of continually changing natural light.

Unlike a photographer, who can opt to use artificial fill-flash to brighten a dark subject, a hunter must deal with the light he is given, with few exceptions. Artificial light for hunting is allowed only when going after some predators, such as coyotes and foxes. In all other cases, the gunner or archer must be content with whatever types of light a particular day gives. He uses to his advantage whatever hunting light is offered or makes do with its shortcomings.



Hal Korber

MY FAVORITE hunting light of all year happens now. When the branches have been stripped by the advancing season, the sun slants low just before setting, traveling horizontally through the woods and across fields.

Hunting light provides as much texture to a day afield as an old brush coat. Hunting light is fickle, never constant, even on an average sunny day. Quality of light is as fleeting as a breeze in a goldenrod field or a snowflake on a setter's warm nose. Other conditions being the same, the light experienced during a hunt varies its angle continually, even if the hunter is sitting still on stand.

The patterns made by sunlight filtering through autumn leaves are in never-ending change, even if there is no wind. The change occurs at a snail-slow pace, at least from the hunter's point of view. It is the result of how the earth spins on its axis during the unfolding day and how it tilts and circles the sun in its seasonal journey. Though a hunter can remain in one spot for hours, he is hunting a new place second by second, encountering new hunting situations, expectations and challenges, all because the light is always different.

Right now late fall is slipping into winter and the woods are nearly bare of the leaf-and-flower interest of preceding months. Often the only thing that breaks the day's monotony is the personality of the hunting light. But what great light that can be.

My favorite hunting light all year happens now. When the branches have been stripped by the advancing season, the sun slants low just before setting, traveling horizontally through the woods and across fields. In that level light, trees, feathery dried weeds and thin-limbed brush are all lit gloriously from the side, or even from below, by the last gold rays of the day. The effect is dramatic, as if stage footlights are shining. Shadows are blue in low-lying pockets of frosty ground where the sun doesn't reach. But where it does strike branch tips above, it spreads a honey haze. Seen against a cold, azure sky, this is the best hunting light there is.

To me this light says "wild game." It's true hunting light when the sun is high enough that I can still see well and low enough that wildlife is on the move. When this light settles on the woods I feel my heart beating strongly in my throat, in anticipation. My eyes cue the rest of my body that this is the light in which I've shot many deer and squirrels. After a high-sun afternoon, this is the time when I don't have to just hope but can expect to hear the leaf rustle that means game is afoot.

One of the first slides in my outdoor photography slide show is of such a light in a mature pine forest, with trunks neatly spaced to allow the sun to slip between. In the photograph the low, burnished rays look almost palpable, touchable, as they silhouette the rough, black bark. I wonder if any of the photography students who are hunters recognize that particular light for what great hunting light it is.

I know the hunting light is equally great for game-getting just after dawn, but that time of day never has the same feel to me

or means as much as the slanting sun of a waning afternoon. For other hunters, though, morning light might mean more.

In my slide presentation I also have a shot of a blue heron, in near silhouette, in a misty morning marsh. The light is pale pearl, fringed with pastels, and touched by dawn silver. Duck hunters know well that gray, yet more than gray, light that appears just when a pond, river or swamp emerges from the dark. They would recognize the light fog moving across the water, hiding this group of cattails, drifting away from that island, playing with the outline of the wading bird.

I know the hunting light is equally great for game-getting just after dawn, but that time of day never has the same feel to me or means as much as the slanting sun of a waning afternoon.

Waterfowlers might say this morning light is the best hunting light. Even I concede it could equal my late-day favorite, if I'd had their experiences. They could probably guess the time of year in the photo, when the water is warm but the night had been cold, because they have waited expectantly at marsh-side that time of autumn.

Hunting light changes not only with the time of day, but also with the time of year. In length of day, May's hunting light should be like November's. Within the framework of the astronomical year, both months are equally distant from (or close to) a solstice and an equinox and have the same number of daylight hours. But the earth's tilt is different spring and fall. The world's position in its yearly journey around the sun is as far apart then as the first day of summer is from the first day of winter. So how could the hunting light be the same? On a spring gobbler morning, warm hunting light passes through the stained glass windows of new green leaves and tree flowers white, rose and yellow. On a bear season opener, the cold, watery blue of a November sky is reflected in the dusting of snow underfoot, with steelier tones in the shadows.

Hunting light, like outdoor photography light, comes to us in basically two ways: by reflected light and by incident light. Incident light is that which falls directly on the subject. I recently purchased a piece of photo equipment called an incident light meter. I hold it in my hand, in the same light that's falling on the subject, and take a reading that I set my camera to. This ensures my photo will have the correct exposure — not too dark and not too light, but just right. By using the incident light meter, I can measure the light coming from its source, the sky.

Incident light might be the blaze coming from a summer sun in a bluebird sky, the type groundhog hunters encounter on a low-humidity afternoon. Or it might be hazy, filtered light, when August humidity soars. Or incident light could be the midday, cloud-caused dusk that sends woodchuck hunters scurrying home before the thunderstorm hits. Water vapor and droplets, as well as smoke, place a veil between the incident light's source, the sun, and the light's destination.

Incident light that hits something and bounces away becomes reflected light. Reflected light is affected, in intensity and in color, by what it has rebounded from. We see most items by the light from another source, like the sun, that they reflect into our eyes. We experience second hand, even third hand light. Sometimes an object is so large and its color so intense that the light reflecting from it will take on the hues of the object, becoming a tinted floodlight. Such color-enhanced light is a very beautiful hunting light to happen upon.

I like to remember and revisit a particu-

lar maple every October during archery season. When the sun is hitting the tree's red leaves from the east, the reflection makes everything around it assume a crimson glow. The surrounding woods, the ground, approaching deer and I all appear as if seen through a red-orange lens filter, such is the tonal saturation and intensity of the bounced light. But walk a few steps away from the tree and the landscape returns to normal light; the show is over.

The light of day is taken for granted. We assume, and so far we've always been right, that the sun will come up tomorrow. Hunters, who are usually so good at noticing things, may be overlooking how the quality of light falling around them brightens or dulls their day afield. But I might be misjudging them. After all, if they know the answer to the question whether sunshine climbs the tree in the morning or descends from the top branches to the ground, then they are already aware of hunting light. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

How Far Will They Shoot

Match the cartridge with the correct maximum distance it can travel.

_____	1.5 miles	E.	7mm Rem. Mag.
_____	2 miles	C.	.30-06
_____	2.5 miles	S.	.30-30
_____	2.9 miles	D.	.22 Short
_____	3.5 miles	A.	.243 Win.
_____	4 miles	I.	.35 Rem.
_____	4.5 miles	T.	.222 Rem.
_____	5.25 miles	N.	.338 Win.

Solve the secret code by jotting down the letter that precedes each of the following letters in the alphabet.

Bmxbzt	cf	tvsf	pg	zpvs	ubshfu	boe	cfzpoe
_____	___	_____	___	_____	_____	_____	_____.

answers on p. 62

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers
Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

The deer seasons, naturally, keep us busy during the first half of the month, but the crews also get plenty of inside odd jobs done that will ensure our equipment will be ready for spring planting.

IT'S HARD to believe that we are at the end of another year. It seems like not long ago we were all worried about "Y2 . . . something." It's that time of year again. Many people say that December starts with Christmas shopping and ends with a New Year's party. We, who live and breathe hunting, would say that December comes in with buck season and goes out with muzzleloader and small game season. I guess it all depends upon your point of view. Even though winter does not officially begin until the 21st of the month, we are all hoping for snowfall well before that. With the ground covered in snow, hunters have an edge. We can see movement better, we can see where the game was, and a blood trail is much easier to follow. Snow also gives the wildlife conservation officer an edge. The snow will tell a story if you know how to read it. The officer can "read" where the game was, where the hunter was, seeing where the shot was fired from and where the animal fell. Snow is also very helpful when performing the unpleasant task of investigating a hunting incident.

When hunting or performing law enforcement duties, I always hope for snow, but as a land management officer, I would much rather have frozen ground without snow. Just because you have snow cover does not mean that the ground is frozen. When you have frozen ground, the ground is hard and it allows us to use heavy equipment in an area without causing damage. This is very important for accomplishing tasks such as making new brush piles for rabbits in an area seeded with clover. Snow makes it more difficult for my crews to reach portions of the game lands in vehicles; frozen ground without snow makes it easy to get around. I can get a lime spreading truck on game lands when the ground is frozen hard, but I can't with snow cover.



FROZEN GROUND this month allows us to use heavy equipment on our food plots without causing a lot of damage to grass and clover.

Week One

Most of the food and cover crew has taken vacation this week to hunt. Crew members Scott and Willard, who are also deputies, have used their vacation days to perform law enforcement duties. It's this

kind of dedication from our volunteer force that has made Pennsylvania's deputy program one of the best. No other state has a better program, or a better-trained and dedicated group of volunteer officers.

I spend most of this first week of buck season working law enforcement with Deputy Bob Salizzoni from Jefferson County. Bob has been a deputy and a friend for many years, and is an excellent law enforcement officer. We have worked as patrol partners many times in the past and know how each other will handle a given situation.

The spotty snow cover this week both helped and hampered our efforts. We spent the first morning of buck season working an area that was posted with No Trespassing signs. WCO Roger Hartless had received some information that bait was being used in this rather remote area. It was kind of strange because some years ago when I was the WCO in this district, I cited a fellow from this same camp for illegally hunting over bait. Bob and I were there first thing opening morning. As I was checking a hunter in a treestand, Bob was walking around the grounds underneath the stand. When I looked over at Bob he gave me the "signal" that something was wrong. There among the patches of snow, Bob had located a pile of white salt used to entice the deer and get them used to coming into the area beneath the stand. This was hard to see because of the patchy snow, but Bob has done this many times and has no trouble spotting the loose salt. The fellow in the treestand tried to argue that salt wasn't bait. He also told me that it wasn't "Godly" that he be cited for a violation. I explained to him that I also had a relationship with the Lord, and if I remember scripture correctly, we are instructed to obey all the laws. He then said that he was a war veteran and should be shown some type of "consideration" for the time he spent serving his country. As we were finishing with this individual, he indicated that his buddy was hunting from a treestand about 100 yards from where we were. Bob headed in that direction and I soon followed. When I got there I found Bob checking this other fellow, who had a deer and was having a hard time explaining why his tag was still attached to his license, and why the deer was covered with pine branches. We then completed some "business" with this individual.

The next couple of days were spent patrolling with Bob, talking with lots of hunters, and even visiting a couple of camps. We checked many deer and were able to gather some important biological data. Just because WCOs want to check your deer and tag does not mean they are suspicious that you broke the law. Many times we will fill out a "502" report on your deer to record valuable research data. This kind of data can be gathered only during the hunting season. The information will later be entered into a computer to form a database of season and harvest information.



THE CREWS accomplish many small jobs during high pressure hunting days. Willard Kline sharpens a chain saw blade.

Week Two

The first couple days of this week are spent working law enforcement, but as hunting pressure declines, I spend some time catching up on my land management work. I have a meeting with two gas com-

panies, one would like to use one of our roads to make some line repairs after deer season, and the other wants to apply for a new right of way across game lands.

The crew has been working inside this week. It's a good time for us to complete work on our large mowers, such as blade sharpening, welding and repainting. We are fixing the axle on a set of finish discs as well as completing some repairs and maintenance to the older tractors. The guys have a long list of inside projects to complete, which includes assembling wood duck, bluebird and mallard nest structures; building repairs and painting; and maintenance work on our small bulldozer.

It's also a good time for Everett and Gary to bring their game lands reports and records up to date. Our guys keep records of all the work they accomplish on the game lands. This time is also well spent preparing material lists for other work we plan to accomplish in the spring. It's a good time of year to figure our fertilizer and seeding needs, and get those items ordered, as they are cheaper this time of year. The crew also finds this a good time to shuffle vehicles and equipment into the shop for larger repairs. Scott, who is our chainsaw specialist, spends this time to get all the saws ready for the upcoming border-cutting season.

Week Three

The first part of this week is consumed by the antlerless season. Although there are less hunters out, there are more violations and more calls, and more harvested deer to check. We are lucky if we can cover even 10 miles by lunchtime. It seems that we always get tied up with license problems or violations on each stop. I spend the first day with Deputy Willard Kline from Clarion County. We spend the morning on foot, looking for the owners of a Suburban and an untagged deer. After finally finding the vehicle owner, he says that the person who shot the deer was a teenager, and he was in another vehicle. The story was that he harvested the deer, tagged it, brought it out to the vehicle, and jumped in with some other guys from his camp to help them put on a drive elsewhere. Okay, I thought, but what happened to the tag? If the tag was lost during the drag, why didn't they fill out a slip of paper with the license information and attach that to the deer? After a lot of searching, Willard and I caught up with the teenager. He was not carrying a gun when we found him, so I knew he was not attempting to take a second deer. He said the tag was lost while dragging the deer back to the car, and he didn't know that he had to make out a homemade tag. We showed him that by stuffing the tag inside the ear, then tying the ear shut, it's nearly impossible to lose the tag.

Just before lunch we get one of those dreaded radio calls. We were asked to head for the Marienville area to investigate a hunting incident. We are about 40 miles away when we get the call, and although we're not the closest unit, we are the closest unit to hear the call. The other units are probably out of their vehicles on other investigations, or on foot patrol. As we head for the area, we receive a second radio message telling us that the victim has been transported to the hospital at Clarion. We turn around and head in that direction but are called off because there is another unit closer to the hospital.

That's just the way it is in doe season; one minute seems so busy it makes our heads spin, and then we find ourselves watching some deer beside the roadway and wondering where the road hunters are. Usually the quiet times don't last, and you don't have time to stay there watching the deer for too long.

Once in a while, however, we happen to be at the right place at the right time, like the time we were following a pickup that stopped in the middle of the road and all the occupants jumped out and started shooting. These guys never saw the school bus coming toward them or, for that mat-

ter, the conservation officer behind them. Nobody was hurt, but it goes to show how some people can be model citizens all year, but come deer season, they seem to go crazy. Ninety-five percent of the hunters out there are sportsmen. Most of the hunters we have contact with are good folks, even the ones we end up citing for violations.

I would like to give credit to the radio dispatchers all over the state. These folks have a tough job. On their shift they must answer hundreds of phone calls, give accurate information, coordinate the locations of a hundred officer patrol units in 10 counties, and assist them in requested license and vehicle information. It's not an easy job, but our people are professionals. Many times they are our only link to help when we are on a late night investigation or involved in a volatile situation. There have been a couple of times in my career when I've been involved in intense situations, and that familiar voice coming back to me through the radio sounded real sweet.

Week Four

Although the major deer seasons are now over, we remain busy. There are investigations to complete, license numbers to be checked, visits to deer processors, citations to be filed, and a hundred other things to be done. The local WCOs handle most of this, however, I try to help as much as possible. The crews spend much of this time preparing for the after Christmas seasons. We usually have our last pheasant stocking just before Christmas, we check our parking lots to replace signs, plow snow if needed, check the handicapped roads and clear any problems such as fallen limbs or plugged culverts.

For many, hunting season is now over and their thoughts turn to the holidays, family and football. This week of quiet actually gives wildlife a break as well. It gives them a chance to get settled and start back in to a pattern.

They also get a chance to fill their bellies without interruption before the second season starts. Some don't realize what a good time this second season can be. If you dress properly, it's really a wonderful time to be outside.

Even if you don't get some nice new outdoor equipment for Christmas, consider spending some time hunting, trapping, fishing, photographing, or just enjoying the winter wonderland found out your window. Just remember that it's still hunting season, so wear some orange when you're out.

May God bless you and yours with a warm and joyful holiday season. □

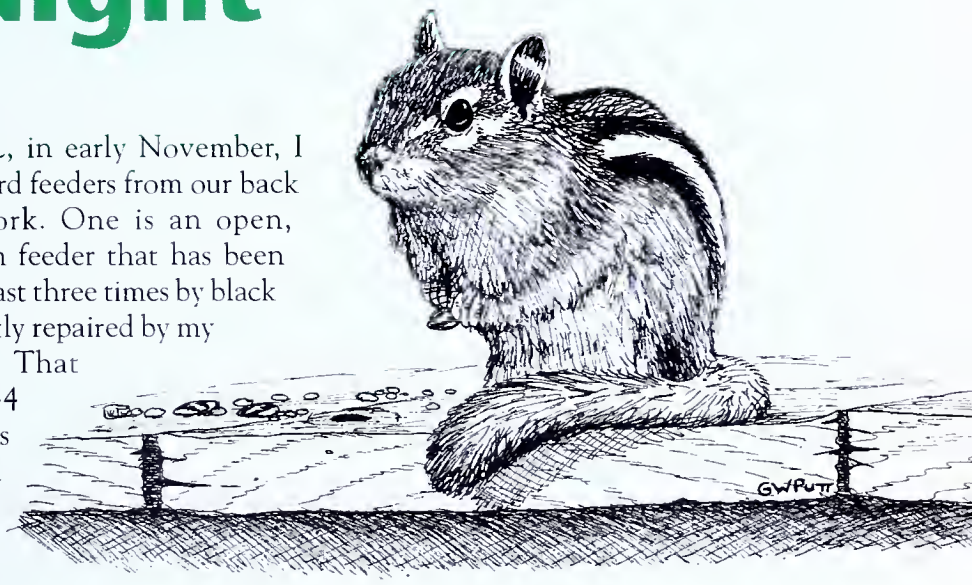
DAYS OF YORE



THE LOCATION of this hunting camp is unknown, but the year was 1903. The buck's weight was listed at 225 pounds, and it was taken by a fellow (probably standing to the left of the deer) named Stewart. Note that most of the hunters are carrying shotguns. A couple of rabbits and a grouse also grace the game pole.

Marcia discovers that some interesting critters visit her birdfeeders after the sun goes down.

The Feeders at Night



EVERY FALL, in early November, I hang two bird feeders from our back porch latticework. One is an open, wooden platform feeder that has been batted apart at least three times by black bears and patiently repaired by my husband Bruce. That feeder is almost 34 years old and has great sentimental value to us. The birds also prefer it to our other feeder that is a sturdy tube reinforced by steel mesh and is, so far, bear proof. Both feeders are filled with oil sunflower seeds.

On the back steps and ground below, I scatter mixed seeds of millet, cracked corn and sunflower. That setup attracts a diversity of bird species and some mammals, too. During the daytime, I've watched cottontail rabbits, gray squirrels, chipmunks, eastern meadow voles, deer, opossums and short-tailed shrews eat seeds. Some of the voles and shrews even locate their burrow entrances in the midst of the spilled seed and pop in and out of the ground like jack-in-the-boxes.

A 10-foot juniper bush in front of our bay window near the back porch provides cover and nighttime roosting for dozens of birds, particularly dark-eyed juncos. Sometimes, though, a junco is confused by the light shining through the window and flies repeatedly into the glass. That's what we thought was happening one evening in late November three years ago.

First one junco then another repeatedly hit the window. They seemed to be having trouble settling down for the night. Even when we turned off the inside light the thumps continued.

Finally, our son Dave turned on the porch light. To our surprise a red phase eastern screech owl, which had been

perched on the open bulkhead door next to the back porch, took off. No wonder the juncos had been jumpy. Screech owls are known predators of songbirds. But because that owl had been situated above the seed-strewn ground, we suspected that its intended prey were the rodents that surfaced to feed throughout the night.

After that experience we became occasional nighttime watchers of our bird feeding area, especially during a 6-week winter visit by our then year-and-a-half-old granddaughter, Eva, and her parents. She, like her father and two uncles had when they were children, spent much of the day watching animals from the back door window.

Our nighttime watching consisted of turning on the back porch light after supper to check for visitors. Usually we saw nothing, but on December 8 there was a southern flying squirrel eating seeds on the back porch. Eva had already been thrilled by gray squirrels during the day, but there is no small mammal more beguiling than a big-eyed, flying squirrel. This one seemed unafraid of the excited little girl and continued eating as we watched.

Three nights later it brought a friend. One sat in the wooden feeder and ate while the other ate on the back porch. Eventually, they climbed to the top of the porch, spread their patagia, or gliding membranes, and volplaned into the night. No doubt they had a nest in a nearby tree cavity, and our bird feeding station was one of several stops during their nocturnal search for food.

That was the last we saw of the flying squirrels, although they may have shifted their schedule and fed later in the evening. Because we checked only between 6 and 8:30 p.m., and only on some evenings, we probably missed many late-night visitors.

However, we didn't miss a return visit from a screech owl on January 10, only this was a gray phase bird. It sat on the roof of the wooden bird feeder while one frightened junco flew back and forth under the porch roof.

The screech owl seemed uninterested in the bird, but it gave all of us, including Eva, a good, long look before flying off. Unfortunately, Eva was not here last winter when we had almost continual early evening visitors from November until March, and because of their distinctive appearances, we knew they were the same animals. It all began as Bruce, Dave and I sat eating dinner in the kitchen on November 11. Suddenly, there was a loud thump on the back storm door. We rushed to turn on the porch light and were in time to watch an adult raccoon behead and eat a junco that had been roosting in the latticework above the wooden feeder. The raccoon totally ignored us and tore into the junco as if it were starved, leaving only a few feathers as evidence of its deed.

A week later, at dusk, three young raccoons appeared on the back steps to eat birdseed. Turning on the porch light didn't deter them. Neither did opening the squeaky, inside door, sitting on a chair, and watching them through the screened storm door. When the telephone rang, they looked up briefly. When I talked to them, they also glanced up and sometimes retreated back down a step or two, but they were soon back and looking in at me. Finally, after an hour and 20 minutes, and some staring intently into the night, they left.

Young raccoons usually spend the winter in a communal nest with their mother and sometimes other raccoons, as many as 23, in a state of semi-hibernation, having built up a layer of fat to sustain themselves during winter food shortages. Those dens are most often in hollow trees but will also be under tree roots, in rocky crevices, or in remodeled woodchuck, opossum, fox or skunk dens.

According to Dave, however, those raccoons probably lived under the guesthouse, along with a skunk, an opossum and a porcupine. Living above this mammal condominium, he spent the winter listening to the assorted bumps, snarls, screams and

hisses below his bedroom, and examining tracks in the snow, so he could identify his fellow boarders.

Throughout November the triplets, as we called the young raccoons, visited most evenings, but we never saw an adult. Often, though, they would seem to be disturbed by something in the forest and would leave. Sometimes I thought I heard a faint sound. Was their mother warning them off? Had she been the visitor that had killed the junco?

Then, on December 2, a young opossum came to the back porch to eat seed. Unlike the triplets, it barely tolerated the porch light. Any sight or sound of us sent it back down the steps with many backward, hesitant looks. Because young opossums stay with their mothers for only three months, this one was on its own. Although opossums don't hibernate, they are relatively inactive in late autumn and winter, staying in nests of grass and leaves, or so the experts say. Because they are southern animals and have a difficult time if the temperature dips below 19 degrees Fahrenheit, opossums that live through a northern winter usually have deformed ears, and even tail, because of frostbite.

This opossum seemed to time its arrival before or after the triplets' visit. On December 4 the triplets came shortly after dusk and the opossum at 8:30. The next evening the triplets came in at 8:15, staying until our bedtime. Then, for most of December, the opossum arrived around 6:30, ate its fill and left. As soon as it was gone, at 8, the triplets appeared. By morning all the seeds on the steps and ground were gone.

Raccoons are known to be peaceable animals with no sense of territoriality. Virginia Holmgren, who actively fed raccoons all year long from 1960 until 1981, observed 145 young and their mothers, and claimed, in her charming book, *Raccoons*, that her raccoons fed peacefully with opossums whenever they appeared.

We had to wait until the following March 3 to see how raccoons and opossums interacted. That evening Bruce and I were busy in the front yard watching the moons of Jupiter, the Orion nebulae, and the Pleiades star cluster through our new birding scope. While we were admiring the incomprehensible universe from our front yard, a raccoon and opossum, at opposite ends of the feeder area, were filling their bellies. No aggression there, but I did see aggression between the triplets on December 14. Two of the coons pushed the third one off the steps, but it didn't protest; it merely fed quietly on the ground below its siblings.

On the evening of that autumn day it became winter, and the triplets appeared for what we thought was the last time. But the opossum continued visiting throughout the winter months, even though its coat looked too thin to get it through the cold.

In places its skin showed through like a balding old man with a few strands of gray



hair combed carefully over his head. We didn't always see the opossum, but, unlike raccoons that never defecate in their feeding area, it left a pile of scat on the porch and steps every night.

During the cold weeks of early January, when the temperature dipped into the single digits, the opossum continued to visit. By January 18, it ate as if half-starved and no longer reacted either to the porch light or my comments to it. The thermometer registered a mere seven degrees Fahrenheit, proving that opossums can not only survive temperatures below 19 degrees, but do move around and feed in the bitter cold.

Then, on the morning of February 6, I went outside while it was still dark to retrieve the bird feeder containers from the back porch. An animal rushed away, using mincing steps that reminded me of a Chinese woman with bound feet, a white fur clinging fashionably to her back. But it was a striped skunk, its tail streaming out straight behind as if it wouldn't think of threatening anyone on its home ground, which seemed to be under our front porch. I caught no whiff of skunk, and when I returned from our basement, where I store our birdseed, I turned on the porch light and cautiously looked outside. The skunk was back, eating seeds on the cement pad in front of the bulkhead door, its white, back and tail gusting in the breeze. It ate as if it was starved and only retreated when the first birds appeared in the dim, predawn light. Like the skunk Bruce had photographed at our feeders the previous March, it had a white back, sides and tail, a black belly, and a black face divided by a single, longitudinal white nose stripe.

Although skunks will eat seeds, their principal winter foods are mice, voles and shrews. I wondered if the skunk was more interested in eating the critters that ate our seeds. Skunks, like raccoons, also build up fat before winter so they can snooze through fierce winter weather. But they do get out and forage on milder days and, as I discovered, on cold (23 degrees) nights as well.

Skunks, too, usually nest communally in a single den (as many as 15), so I wondered if there were more than one in the den under our front porch and what relation it had to any living under the guesthouse.

"A raccoon," Holmgren writes, "might snarl at another raccoon poaching on its corner of the bowl, but not at a skunk. The smaller animal had a right that . . . raccoons were too smart to defy."

On March 2 we had a chance to test her statement. I switched on the porch light at 8:30 p.m. and found that not only were the triplets back, but so was the skunk. The raccoons moved menacingly toward it as it tried to feed on the steps. Instantly its tail shot up, it stamped its front foot and then turned away.

I held my breath, but instead of spraying, the white skunk made a dignified retreat, its tail still high in the air. I couldn't decide whether the raccoons were intimidated by the skunk's threat of its ultimate weapon, but when it quietly returned a few minutes later, its tail was down and it fed peacefully off to the side of the raccoons just above the bulkhead door. They were still eating harmoniously when I went upstairs to take my shower. Later, when I opened my bedroom windows, there was not even a faint whiff of skunk.

That was the last we saw of the skunk and the triplets, but the opossum appeared once more shortly after dark on March 19. It scarfed up birdseed like a vacuum cleaner. Clearly it was very hungry, as most mammals are by March.

I could only hope that those animals that had made our nighttime feeder watching entertaining throughout the winter survived the harshest winter month of all. □

Those evenings of lounging in your treestand amidst foliage ablaze with color are long gone. If you have deer tags to fill, you'll need to change tactics to cope with conditions during the winter season.

Late Season Bowhunting Success

WELCOME to the late season: Cold, windy, barren, snowy, precious little cover — downright nasty. For many bowhunters, it's a time to stay inside, enjoy the holidays, drink hot chocolate, and reminisce about those crafty old bucks of October and November. But for Otto Hecksher, it's a time to take his bow down from the rack and head outside to the winter woods. It's time to fill his buck tag.



WINTER SNOWS make it a simple task to locate deer and sign during late season forays.

Over the years, Hecksher has enjoyed significant bowhunting success in Penn's Woods. Although he began bowhunting back in 1975, he didn't arrow his first deer (a doe) until 1980. "Since then, I've taken a deer every year — more than 30 in all, a lot of them antlerless here in the special regulations area," he says. Hechsher has arrowed at least 10 bucks over the years. Three of the nicest were late season kills. How does he do it? What advice would he offer the rest of us?

For one thing, Otto Hecksher's career as a high school biology, chemistry and environmental science teacher contributes to his high late season success rate. His Christmas vacation overlaps with the first week of our late season, affording him a lot of time to hunt. Hecksher lives in Kennett Square in increasingly suburban Chester County, an area that is becoming less and less conducive to firearms hunting.

Although bucks may be active in the secondary rut that often corresponds with Pennsylvania's late season, Hecksher doesn't include any sex lures in his late sea-

son bag of tricks, but he always uses masking lures such as fox urine or earth scent. With no foliage on the trees or understory, deer can be sighted at greater distances than in the regular bow season. Snow cover with fresh tracks can also make patterning a relatively easy task.

Like any good bowhunter, Hecksher knows his own limitations and restricts his shots to 20 or 25 yards at most. "Preferably, I'll locate deer in an area where there are lots of trees to break up my silhouette. Once I determine which direction the deer should be coming from, I place my treestand on the opposite side of the tree, again to help break up my outline. I'll draw my bow — a High Country Z-Force and Easton arrows fitted with 100-grain Muzzy broadheads — only when there's a tree between me and the deer's eyes," explains the 53-year-old Hecksher. Hecksher sets his treestands about 15 feet off the ground. "When deer are in the vicinity, you have to stay absolutely still or, with the lack of cover, they will spot you at that height," he emphasized.

"I like to hunt pockets of partially developed land that can't accommodate firearm hunters but which, by the same token, are adjacent to ground that is heavily pressured by shotgun hunters. Over the weeks of the regular firearms buck season and our extended special regulations antlerless season, the deer are pushed into these pockets and tend to stay there for the duration of the firearms season and beyond. They're bound to still be there when that second archery season rolls around."

Hecksher's experience suggests that more of the smarter, bigger bucks survive the regular season. As a result, a higher ratio of mature bucks are available during the late season because their younger, less savvy brethren are taken in the traditional archery season and the regular firearms season. "I've killed five bucks in the 6-point or better range," Hecksher noted, "but only two of those were in October." Some bucks may drop their antlers before or during the late archery season. "There was one buck I shot in the late season," Hecksher recalled, "that lost its antlers the moment it hit the ground."

Hecksher spends a lot of time in the woods, and he stays the entire day. "In the winter the deer are inclined to collect into larger groups. As a result, you tend to see them less often, but when you do, you'll usually see quite a few of them."

Hechsher, of course, was in the woods during Pennsylvania's 1999-2000 archery seasons. In the regular season, he saw only two bucks, neither of which afforded him a shot. Returning to the same woodlots after Christmas, Hechsher spotted five different bucks, all 6-point or better.

Then, one winter afternoon, a nice 8-point, caught up in the late rut, chased a doe to within 20 yards of Hecksher's treestand. One shot from his bow put the buck down to stay. It was a beautiful deer and, with an inside spread of 24½ inches, it was Hecksher's best buck to date — one more late season success story. In fact, more than 30 percent of the deer he's taken (antlered and antlerless) were taken in the late season.

Like Otto Hecksher, those of us who have carried archery tackle into the winter woods in quest of late season venison know there are other factors that should influence our preparation. In the face of potentially bitter, bone chilling winter temperatures, keeping warm is crucial.

I'll never forget one day, nearly 25 years ago, the first time I ever attempted to fill my archery tag in the winter chill of the second season. I reasoned that, to locate late season deer on the game lands of Fulton County — my customary deer hunting haunts at that time — I would need to hike deep into their winter sanctuary. Patti, then my fiancé and now my wife, whose dedication I have come to appreciate and admire over the years, accompanied me on that memorable trek. We hiked for more than an hour, up and over the treacherous, ice-glazed rockslides of

Blacklog Mountain, until we found a snow-covered plateau where three or four deer trails intersected. The tracks were fresh and easy to read — even for the novice that I was back in those days.

Patti bundled up on the ground, settling next to the upturned roots of an ancient, fallen oak. I scrambled up the incline of the trunk into a fork, which afforded me an elevated stand, maybe eight or 10 feet off the ground. Then we waited for dawn. The strenuous climb up the mountain had taken a toll. I was overheated, and by the time first light arrived I was chilled by the sub-freezing late December temperatures and a sharp breeze that drew across the morning like an icy knife.

Just before 9 o'clock, we heard hooves crunching through the frosty snow cover. A few moments later a string of six does trotted slowly over the ridge and to within 10 yards of my makeshift stand.

But by that time the morning chill had settled so deep into my bones that I found myself essentially paralyzed. Caught between my numbed muscles and restrictive bulky clothing, I couldn't even pull the bow back let alone release an arrow. It was a frustrating but educational experience as I watched the deer scramble over the bench, unmolested, and then disappear down the mountain and into the laurel. The lesson here for late season success is the obvious one — dress to stay warm. Modern innovations such as Gore-Tex and Thinsulate now provide warmth without bulk. No matter what your wardrobe, make sure you practice shooting your bow while fully dressed in the clothing you plan to wear when that wintry moment of truth actually arrives. Fail to prepare and you'll find it far too easy for a bowstring to catch on a puffy sleeve or billowing jacket with all the disastrous results you might imagine.

But what about the vast numbers of bowhunters who, unlike Otto Hecksher, do not have the advantage of access to private ground with pockets undisturbed by firearm hunting? What if the late season bucks in your neighborhood aren't carelessly caught up in the secondary rut? We could do worse than take a cue from our comrades in primitive arms — the muzzleloader hunters.

Up until this year, the black powder season has been exclusively synonymous with the late season. No one has more experience hunting the winter woods than fans of the flintlock, and no one more than Dave Ehrig, known throughout the state and beyond as "Mr. Black Powder." Ehrig has hunted Pennsylvania's late season for more than 25 years. His book *Black Powder Whitetails* is considered by many to be the definitive text on the sport.

I've spent some time with Dave in the deer woods and even more time talking deer hunting with him. As far as the late season is concerned, Ehrig contends that, throughout most of the state, whitetail habits change radically during this time. At this point, with few exceptions, they are concentrating on survival. It's true that some bucks may be cautiously involved in the secondary rut, but after being pressured for four months by bowhunters and then firearm hunters, most of the whitetails have taken to the densest cover they can find. This presents more problems for bowhunters than flintlock hunters, but some of Ehrig's late season smokepole tactics can work for bowhunters.

"With deer holding tight to dense cover," Ehrig notes, "the treestand is of less value." The traditional deer movement patterns that archers rely on in the fall are also of little value in the late season. When the deep freeze sets in, deer conserve calories by moving around as little as possible and staying out of the wind. Running from danger requires a significant loss of energy, so deer are more inclined to bed down and hold tight for as long as possible. "To avoid the wind," explains Ehrig, "winter whitetails like to bed down on the leeward side of the ridge or hill. Don't overlook the conifers. Cone-bearing trees like pines, spruces or hemlocks can reduce wind

speeds by 50 to 75 percent and are excellent sites for deer to yard up. Look for deer to be about one-third of the way down the leeward side of a conifer hillside."

Ehrig advocates "hunting like a canine" for tight-holding winter deer — essentially going into the heavy cover where they're holed up and flushing them out. This may work for a solo flintlock hunter, but for it to have any success in the late archery season, bowhunters have to work together to organize drives of two hunters or more.

During the regular season under most normal circumstances, waiting to ambush a whitetail from an elevated stand is, by far, the most effective hunting method. The strategy of archers teaming up to drive deer is extremely rare. This is because such an intrusive foray into prime whitetail habitat would do more harm than good — disturbing normal deer patterns. But in the late season, when all else fails, a drive may be the only way to arrow your venison.

Even to a greater extent than with traditional treestand bowhunting situations, archers involved in winter drives on the ground need to be selective in the shots they attempt. With an alerted deer already on the move, there is little margin for error, and opportunities for prudent shots will be far outnumbered by chances that an ethical bowhunter would pass up.

On one hand, deer that have been pressured for four months are on edge, and a noisy drive may send them rocketing from cover so fast they'll leave vapor trails behind. This is always a no shot situation for a bowhunter. On the other hand, despite the earlier season hunting pressures, deer that are trying to preserve calories may prefer to sneak quietly past standers or circle back around drivers. This is especially true on quiet drives or on something Ehrig calls "scent drives" where the drivers approach the cover downwind of the deer and let the wind carry their scent into the cover, encouraging the deer to sneak cautiously away. This scenario is more likely to provide bowhunters, both drivers and standers, with realistic shots at fleeing deer.



OTTO HECKSHER with his buck taken during the late archery season in 1999. Otto's specialty is hunting during the winter bow season. Three of the nicest bucks he's tagged were late season kills.

When you spot a deer emerging warily from cover, chances are it will keep glancing back toward the driver(s). This often gives hunters a chance to draw their bow just before or after the deer comes into range. Under these circumstances deer tend to hesitate after every few steps to check their back trails. Wait until the animal stops before taking the shot. If the deer is agitated and moving at a steady pace without stopping, a cough or grunt will sometimes be enough to freeze it in its tracks long enough for you to get off a successful shot. Shooting an arrow at a moving deer should not be part of any archer's repertoire. If the whitetail doesn't stop, don't shoot and hope for a better chance later.

These kinds of late season bowhunting drives can be rigorous, particularly with a crust of snow, and bear little resemblance to the cozy treestand lounging you enjoyed in October. Driving deer isn't for everyone, but if you're serious about filling that archery tag, and you haven't been spotting deer from your traditional stands, you and a few bowhunting buddies just might want to give it a try. □

There are two schools of thought among big game hunters: Those who prefer calibers that handle high velocity cartridges with lighter bullets, and those who prefer lobbing big chunks of lead downrange. It's a matter of preference but . . .

The Big Bores are Back

Helen Lewis



JIM PEIGHTAL and his .376 Steyr with a laminated stock. Note the rather thick recoil pad to help tame the heavy recoil generated by the .376. Scope is a 3-9x Bausch & Lomb.

THE YOUNG HUNTER sat on a snow-covered rock and wiped sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. He was tired, disgusted and nearly two miles from camp. With less than two hours of hunting time left, and in dense brush and heavy timber, he decided it would be easier to hunt from a pipeline that passed several hundred yards below his camp. "This is a poor way to end a hunting season," he grumbled to himself.

He had hunted hard for five days without seeing a buck. Now, he was nearing the end of the sixth day, and he hadn't heard a shot for several hours. He got up, stretched, picked up his 336 Marlin lever action and headed for the pipeline 150 yards away. Just then, shots rang out from a ridge above him, and seconds later he could see deer coming his way.

The first two were does, but the third had a rack. The buck was bounding through what appeared to be a solid wall of brush. He swung the muzzle through the deer and fired. The buck staggered and then fell. The bullet had passed cleanly through the rib cage. Much to his surprise, he discovered his 265-grain bullet had passed through a tree that was nearly four inches thick before hitting the buck. He



Helen Lewis

JIM PEIGHTAL'S custom .376 Steyr printed a group under two inches, but note that three shots are nearly touching.

was thankful he hadn't listened to advice from hunting friends who cautioned against buying the big "slow poke" cartridge. He doubted their faster, lighter bullets would have matched the performance of his .444 Marlin.

Big bores and powerful cartridges fascinate many hunters. It probably all started with the buffalo hunters who favored the 45-caliber. One buffalo hunter, Frank Mayer, became famous using his 45/120/550 Sharps. It was a 45-caliber and the load was 120 grains of black powder behind a 550-grain slug. By some method he figured the muzzle velocity was around 1,400 fps.

During the latter part of the 1800s big bore cartridges were in vogue. In 1906 the .30-06 (30- caliber, 1906 was the year) was introduced with twice the velocity of 40- and 45-caliber cartridges. Twenty years later the .270 Winchester saw the light of day. Since the advent of the .270 quite a few high velocity cartridges using small diameter bullets were introduced for all types of big game hunting. Yet, the nostalgia of the big bore cartridge is still embedded in American big game hunting lore. Even the old .45-70, once thought dead, is now making a comeback, and the .458 Winchester is available from several manufacturers. So why not the .376 Steyr and the .450 Marlin? Both can be considered big bore even though they are miles apart in muzzle velocities.

The .376 Steyr is the result of collaboration between the Austrian firm Steyr and the Hornady Manufacturing Company. Steyr designed the cartridge and will make rifles for it in the Steyr Scout model. Factory ammunition will come from Hornady, and the company will also produce reloading dies and bullets for the new entry.

When a new cartridge appears on the shooting scene, a typical question often asked is if it's really needed. I don't want to throw cold water on the fire, but most new cartridges do not fill a void. On the other hand, if cartridge designers, reloading toolmakers and rifle manufacturing companies hadn't invested in new cartridges and shooting equipment, the flintlock would still be the primary hunting rifle. Because I'm a wildcatter at heart, all new cartridges are welcomed with open arms by yours truly. This goes for the .376 Steyr and the really big .450 Marlin.

The .376 Steyr is not quite as powerful as the .375 H&H, but it has plenty of punch in a cartridge shorter than the H&H. The .376 Steyr is primarily for really big game, and it qualifies for use in Africa, which has a .375 caliber minimum requirement. This does give the .376 an edge over other powerful big game cartridges such as the .358 Norma Magnum, Remington's .350 Magnum and Weatherby's .340 Magnum.

I realize that the African caliber requirement doesn't mean a hoot to hunters in Pennsylvania. What they want to know is what benefits the .376 Steyr cartridge has for them. It all boils down to individual preferences. For the thousands of .270, .30-06 and 7mm Magnum fans, the .376 Steyr represents an oversized cartridge that has too much recoil. However, for the dedicated big bore hunter, the .376 Steyr has plenty to offer.

Being shorter than most magnum car-

tridges, a shorter action can be used, and that represents less overall weight. Also, standard actions for the .30-06 and .270 Winchester can be used by opening the bolt face to accept the .493 diameter rim of the .376. Action rails will have to be modified for the thicker case to feed properly, however. These aspects should be of some importance to big game hunters. Instead of discussing actions, weight and recoil, let's look at the .376 Steyr's ballistic side.

Hornady sent both 225- and 270-grain factory loads for my tests. I was somewhat surprised at the ballistic information shown on the cartridge boxes. Both the 225-grain and the 270-grain cartridges have muzzle velocities of 2,600 fps. The 225-grain Interlock spire point bullet when zeroed in at 2½ inches high at 100 yards is dead on at 200 yards, nearly 11 inches low at 300 and about 32 inches low at 400. Strange as it may seem, the 270-grain spire point Interlock bullet offers a flatter trajectory. Zeroed in at 1½ inches high at 100 yards, the heavier bullet is dead on at 200, 9¾ inches low at 300, and nearly 29 inches low at 400 yards.

I didn't even try to get a Steyr Scout rifle. Instead, Jim Peightal ordered a .376 finishing reamer and headspace gauge from Loon Lake Precision, Inc., 8200 Embury Road, Grand Blanc, MI, and threaded a Douglas Premium 22½-inch barrel into an EN Mauser action. Jim designed the stock and turned out a neat looking laminated job. He topped it off with a Bausch & Lomb 3-9x scope.

Jim expected recoil to be on the heavy side, and he wasn't disappointed. He used Hornady factory loads for his first tests. The 225-grain spire point Interlock Hornady bullet had an average instrumental velocity of 2,487 fps at 15 feet. True muzzle velocity would be just a shade more than 2,500 fps. The 270-grain Hornady factory round produced a 5-shot average instrumental velocity of 2,599 fps or about 2,630 fps at the muzzle.

These are pretty impressive figures from a big bore cartridge, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. That brings up the subject of accuracy. It's of little consequence how much kinetic energy a bullet produces (terminal ballistics) if the bullet doesn't impact where the hunter is aiming. In other words, the main criteria used to measure any cartridge is its accuracy.

Peightal didn't shoot any one-holers, but in a 1¾-inch 100-yard group, three of five shots landed in less than 5/8-inches. I don't know if he was making an excuse, but he said after firing 20 shots, he was a bit recoil shy. I'm not implying this Steyr will shoot 5-shot ½-inch groups, but a later test with the same cartridges produced 3-shot groups around the 1-inch mark.

The .376 Steyr may not appeal to everyone, but it should generate a fairly strong following. As I mentioned, it doesn't perform significantly better than other big bore cartridges, such as the .350 Remington, .375 H&H or the .338 Winchester, plus two or three other big jobs. It's a non-belted magnum in a short case, and it offers flat trajectories, superb field accuracy and plenty of killing power. Those are the prime ingredients for a high performance big game cartridge.

The .450 Marlin is another joint venture between Hornady Manufacturing Company and Marlin. It looks like a belted magnum, but Hornady doesn't call it a magnum. It has a much longer belt for the sole purpose of preventing accidental chambering in other magnum rifles.

The new chambering is being introduced in Marlin's 1895M .450 lever action rifle. I haven't seen either the rifle or the cartridge, so I can't offer much more on this cartridge. I'm told its power output is somewhere between the .45-70 Government and the .458 Winchester Magnum.

The fate of the .450 Marlin is solely in the hands of big bore lever action fans who like large cartridges and heavy bullets. I have to admit the .450 belted cartridge with a 350-grain slug is a nice addition to Marlin's big bore line. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

There were 471 bears taken in Vermont during the 1999 hunting season. It's estimated that the bear population is between 3,000 to 3,500.

Only three hunter-related firearm incidents with no fatalities marred the Wyoming hunting seasons in 1999 — down from the 20-year average of 6.5 incidents annually.

Hunters took 10,983 elk in Idaho in 1999 for a 14.4 percent success rate.

Answers: D, I, S, T, A, N, C, E.

DISTANCE

Always be sure of your target and beyond.

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By Betsy Maugans

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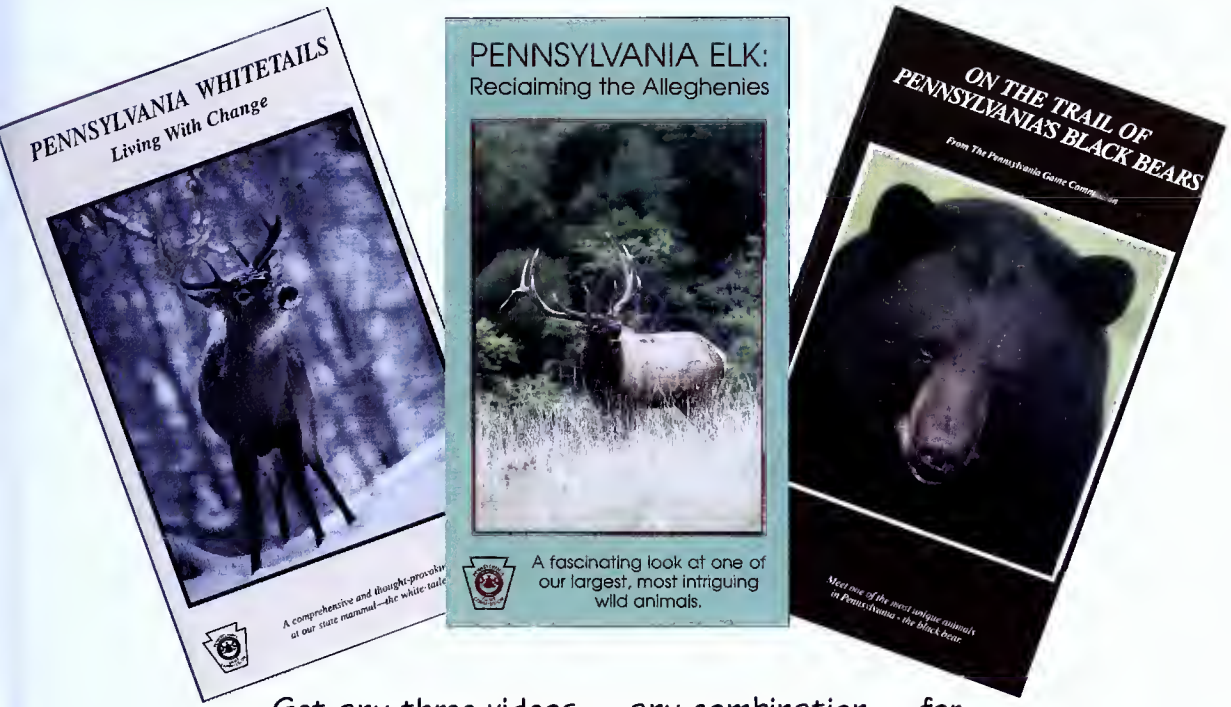
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Third-phase of elk trap-and-transfer completed July
WCO trainee applications being accepted July
2000 Antlerless license allocation July
Peregrine falcon chicks banded Aug.
Turkey study update Aug.
Hambley appointed northcentral director Aug.
1999 Hunting-related shootings lowest ever Aug.
New agency logo approved Sept.
Vern Ross game land tours Sept.
June Commission meeting highlights Sept.
Bald eagle killed; rewards offered Sept.
Dove and goose seasons on tap Sept.
Harbaugh named Northwest Region director Sept.
Orphaned bear cubs released Oct.
Hardisky honored by PA Trappers Association Oct.
Larnerd named NE law enforcement supervisor Oct.
Representative Staback honored Oct.
2000-2001 Waterfowl seasons and bag limits Oct.
Charges filed in eagle killing Nov.
Bobcat permits drawn Nov.
Pennsylvanians perform well at YHEC Nov.
Bernardi, Hill top Game Commission marksmen Nov.
New black bear biologist on board Nov.
Deer poachers nabbed Dec.
Alt honored Dec.
Big bull elk poached Dec.
Commission meeting highlights Dec.

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